

Tongzhi Tales in Mainland China:

Chinese Gay Male Subjectivities in Online Comrade Literature

Rachel Leng

Undergraduate Honors Thesis
Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
Duke University
Durham, North Carolina
April 2013

Committee Members:

Professor Carlos Rojas (Advisor)
Professor Eileen Cheng-yin Chow
Professor Guo-Juin Hong

ABSTRACT

This thesis considers Comrade Literature (同志文学 *tongzhi wenxue*), a genre of contemporary Chinese homosexual (*tongzhi*) fiction, as it has emerged on the internet in Mainland China. Although Comrade Literature first emerged in Hong Kong and Taiwan in the 1980s, it was only after the mid-1990s with the advent of the internet that these gay-themed fiction were disseminated online in Mainland China. There are now hundreds and thousands of stories designated as “Comrade Novels” (同志小说 *tongzhi xiaoshuo*) archived on various Chinese websites. This thesis contends that online Comrade stories are not simply an expression of an underground Chinese gay culture; they are complex cultural texts with deeper meanings as a site of queer resistance facilitating the intersection of homosexual and heterosexual subjectivities. In addition to providing a catalyst for the local *tongzhi* subculture, Comrade fiction in Mainland China capitalizes on new media platforms to present same-sex desire to the broader public.

A close analysis of four online Comrade stories focuses on the representation of male same-sex relations, turning a critical eye to the logics of these texts as *tongzhi* write out of a heteronormative milieu. The three chapters in this thesis will each examine distinct aspects of China’s Comrade Literature: 1) gender performance in same-sex romance narratives, 2) homosexual abjection in Comrade *bildungsroman*, and 3) the continuum of homosocial and homosexual intimacy in military Comrade fiction. Collectively, these four works span a stylistic and temporal timeline that reflect developments in the *tongzhi* subculture on the Mainland. These fiction renegotiate the boundary between heterosexual and homosexual behaviors, establishing a unique *tongzhi* identity that is at once assimilated into yet differentiated from mainstream Chinese heteronormative society to challenge hegemonic norms.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people have been influential in the development of this thesis. I am wholly indebted to my advisor, Professor Carlos Rojas, for all of his support and attention since he first took me on as an independent study pupil in Spring 2012. His patience and guidance throughout this thesis not only pushed me to become a better writer and thinker, but also inspired me to pursue further scholarship with graduate studies. If not for his mentorship, my passion for research and writing would not be what it is today.

I am grateful to the professors on my thesis defense committee for their time and consideration, and my thanks also extends to all the faculty in the Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (AMES) department for their advice and teachings. In particular, my gratitude is due to Professor Guo-Juin Hong for first introducing me to Comrade Literature in his seminar class and encouraging me to explore the topic. His early inspiration and continued support has profoundly influenced my work on this thesis. Throughout my time at Duke, Professor Eileen Cheng-yin Chow has also been a warm and positive presence motivating my interest in East Asian Studies, making me realize just how expansive the field can be and challenging me to think about different literary and cultural products in new ways.

For help with the onerous task of editing, my gratitude goes out to Professor Dwayne Dixon for his tireless patience and sensitivity. I am also grateful to my honors thesis peers in the AMES department, who have provided me constructive feedback to improve my work throughout the writing process.

I wish to express thanks to the AMES department for enabling me to attend conferences and present sections of my work with travel grants. These conferences on East Asia provided wonderful opportunities for me to receive productive questions and feedback, improving my

revisions. In addition, many librarians at the Duke University Libraries, especially Ms. Luo Zhou, have been very generous in sharing their knowledge of available resources and assisting me in obtaining research materials. My gratitude also goes to the Asian and Pacific Studies Institute (APSI) for their research grants that directly influenced my work and perspective in this thesis. My experiences with the *tongzhi* subculture in Beijing, China helped me better understand some of the themes in online Comrade stories. Moreover, I appreciate all the *tongzhi* who took the time to share their lives and experiences with me.

Finally, I wish to thank my family and close friends, whose enthusiasm and interest in this thesis have given me the motivation and perseverance to realize this achievement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
[Comrade Literature: Private Homoerotic Experiences in Public Discursive Space].....	1
[The Comrade Subculture: On Defining “Tongzhi”].....	5
[Cultural and Legislative Environment for Homosexuality in Modern China]	9
[The Internet: Facilitating Communication and Subversive Communities]	11
[Contemporary Scholarship on Homosexuality in Mainland China].....	16
I. <i>Research on China’s History of Same-Sex Relations</i>	16
II. <i>Social Science Studies on Chinese Homosexuality and Tongzhi Identity Politics</i>	19
III. <i>Discourse Exploring Queer Cultural Products and Homosexuality in the PRC</i>	21
[Online Comrade Literature: Virtual Fiction and Political Storytelling]	23
CHAPTER ONE	28
[Comrade Romance Narratives: Private Homoerotic Experiences in Public Discursive Space].....	28
[“Beijing Story”: Gender Performance to Reenact the Traditional Tragic Love Story]	30
[“The Illusive Mind”: Abstracting Gender Identities and Elusive Sexuality]	43
[Comrade Literature and the Public Performance of Private Homoerotic Stories].....	58
CHAPTER TWO	60
[Queer Reflections and Inflections in Comrade Bildungsroman]	60
[Huizi: Adolescent Comrade Same-Sex Friendship and Desire]	63
[Comrade Childhood, Origins of Subjectivity, and Social Difference]	69
[The Comrade Mirror Stage and Self-Abjection]	77
[Less than Jubilant Identifications: Philosophical Sadness and Ruptured Consummation]	86
[Tongzhi Reflections: Queer Desire, Identity, and Friendship]	91
CHAPTER THREE	93
[The Camaraderie Between Soldiers: Homosocial Homoerotics in Military Tongzhi Fiction].....	93
[Military Comrades: Cultural and Political Identity of Tongzhi in the Chinese Army]	95
[Comrades in Arms: Affective Gendered Relations in Military Camaraderie]	105
[Gay Comrades: A Mode of Existence between Intimate Friendship and Friendly Romance?]	116
[Military Gay Comrades: Negotiating the Homosocial(ist) Tongzhi Identity]	124

CONCLUSION	127
[From Cozy Nest to Empty Nest: Parallel Communities in Print and Virtual Spaces]	127
[Network Intimacies and Imagined Communities of Online Comrade Literature]	131
[Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research]	135
[Future Developments for Comrade Literature and Community: Personal Perspectives]	137
[Final Reflections: Online Comrade Literature and Sexual Liberalization in Modern China]	140
BIBLIOGRAPHY	144
APPENDIX	168
Appendix I: Selected Legal Documents Used to Detain Homosexuals in the PRC	168
Appendix II: Brief Chronology of Political Developments Affecting Male Tongzhi	170
Appendix III: Tongzhi Website Screenshots	172
Appendix IV: Classical Chinese Novels with Homoerotic Content	175
Appendix V: Euphemisms for Male Same-Sex Relations in Imperial China	176
Appendix VI: Examples of Tongzhi Microblog Stories	177
Appendix VII: Culturally Specific Terms Used By Tongzhi (Often Online)	178

Tongzhi Tales in Mainland China: Chinese Gay Male Subjectivities in Online Comrade Literature

INTRODUCTION

[Comrade Literature: Private Homoerotic Experiences in Public Discursive Space]

As a novel that overtly portrays the lives of a Taiwanese male homosexual community, Bai Xianyong's (白先勇) *Crystal Boys* 《孽子》 (1983) is an iconic text of Comrade Literature (同志文学 *tongzhi wenxue*), a genre of contemporary Chinese homosexual (*tongzhi*) fiction. *Crystal Boys* (1983) grapples with the dilemmas Chinese homosexuals confront when trying to establish a community unified by homoerotic relations – a difficult task in a cultural environment that marginalizes all non-heteronormative behaviors. The story takes place in 1970s Taipei during the martial law era and relates the precarious lives of “crystal boys” – a community of gay male sex workers – as they cruise in New Park for a living. After several boys are arrested for prostitution and the park is placed under curfew, a veteran of the gay male community opens the Cozy Nest tavern. The initial success of the tavern appears to allow these male sex workers to evade legal persecution and connect with an intimate gay community in a publicly accessible yet sheltered venue.

However, the delicate social dynamic fostered in the Cozy Nest as a new meeting ground for gays is disrupted when a tabloid reporter publishes an *exposé* on the tavern, describing it as “a den of fairies” where people who “shar[e] the same ‘affliction’” gather “to taste the forbidden fruit” (282). The Nest soon becomes much less cozy when it is flooded with “a new breed of birds” – curious heterosexuals who regard gays as ephemeral objects of fascination (285). The

Cozy Nest is quickly forced to “[close] its doors for good” to prevent anybody associated with the tavern – and by extension, homosexuality – being exposed by name (313).

The fate of the Cozy Nest in *Crystal Boys* presents an interesting anecdote about the variable impacts of private homosexual experiences that become publicly available. The circulation of texts about homoerotic liaisons reveals the miscommunication between a marginalized homosexual subculture and the dominant heterosexist society. *Crystal Boys* offers its own publicly distributed “report” to shed light on the private experiences of a shadowy gay community, forging a discursive space for homosexuality to emerge. Other queer Chinese fiction from Taiwan and Hong Kong such as Chen Ruoxi’s *Paper Marriage* 《纸婚》 (1986) and Zhu Tianwen’s *Notes of a Desolate Man* 《荒人手记》 (1994) similarly sparked discussion about *tongzhi* topics (Chang and Wang 1995; Yeh 1998). These novels take homosexuality as their subject, increasing awareness of the underground *tongzhi* experience in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and diasporic Chinese communities (Chi 2002; Huang 2010).

However, gay-themed literature was not produced in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) until the advent of the internet in 1994 when writers disseminated *tongzhi* texts online. This new media platform made it possible for people on the mainland to gain access to *tongzhi* stories (Ho 2010). To date, notable scholarship has been conducted on the homosexual community and queer literature within Hong Kong and Taiwan (e.g.: Huang 2011; Rofel 2007). In contrast, Comrade fiction from the PRC has not yet received critical attention, despite the nation’s rich history and rapidly changing sociopolitical environment for homosexuals. There are now hundreds and thousands of stories designated as “Comrade Novels” (同志小说 *tongzhi xiaoshuo*) archived on various Chinese websites. A quick search of “*tongzhi wenxue*” on Baidu.com will reveal that it is not unusual for popular *tongzhi* websites to have millions of

subscribers. Members of *tongzhi* websites participate in the virtual community by reading, sharing, and writing Comrade fiction on designated webpages.¹

This thesis contends that online Comrade stories are not simply an expression of an underground Chinese gay culture; they are complex cultural texts with deeper meanings as a site of queer resistance facilitating the intersection of homosexual and heterosexual subjectivities. In addition to providing a catalyst for the local *tongzhi* subculture, Comrade fiction in Mainland China capitalizes on new media platforms to present same-sex desire to the broader public. A close analysis of four online Comrade stories focuses on the presentation of male same-sex relations, turning a critical eye to the logics of these texts as *tongzhi* write out of a heteronormative milieu. The three chapters in this thesis will each examine distinct aspects of China's Comrade Literature: 1) gender performance in same-sex romance narratives, 2) homosexual abjection in Comrade *bildungsroman*, and 3) the continuum of homosocial and homosexual intimacy in military Comrade fiction. Collectively, the four works analyzed span a stylistic and temporal timeline that reflect developments in the *tongzhi* subculture on the Mainland. These texts renegotiate the boundary between heterosexual and homosexual behaviors, establishing a unique *tongzhi* identity that is at once assimilated into yet differentiated from mainstream Chinese heteronormative society.

How do Comrade stories portray homosexuality to subvert the public misperception of male same-sex relations? How do they shape discourses on gender and sexuality by redefining the homo/heterosexual dichotomy? In recent decades, the tide of homosexual visibility sweeping Chinese society has become one of the most energetic forces of cultural representation and political intervention (Berry *et al.* 2003; French

¹ For example, as of November 2012, BoySky (阳光地带 *yangguang didai*) has more than 7 million registered users with an average of 587 page visits every day. As a prominent *tongzhi* website, Boysky currently holds more than 20,000 stories, many of which are constantly being updated. New chapter additions are posted at an approximate rate of 5-10 per day (BoySky 2012).

2010). Local scholars began publishing work on the subject in historical, medical, and social science discourses (e.g.: Hua 1985; Li and Wang 1992; Fang 1995; Li 1998). The last few years have also seen the marked development of a semi-public culture of gay bars, restaurants, and cruising zones, as well as the continued efforts of gay activists (Jackson and Sullivan 2001; Wan 2001). Nonetheless, a fundamental component of Mainland China's *tongzhi* culture is rooted in the writing and reading of online Comrade texts. Hence, this thesis analyzes how Comrade stories craft liminal fictional worlds where heterosexual and homosexual identities can seemingly coexist, appealing to a variety of reader identifications.

The introduction situates Comrade Literature in China as an online fiction genre and popular culture phenomenon. This section provides the theoretical framework of past research contributing to an exploration of modern China's homosexual community and portrayal of male-male sexuality in online Comrade Literature. China's history of same-sex relations has distinctly shaped the sociopolitical context surrounding today's *tongzhi* community. Accordingly, a historical overview will discuss how heightened Qing conservatism, Communist dogma, and Western attitudes towards gender and sexuality concomitantly contributed to modern China's proscription of same-sex practices. The role of the internet as a central feature of online Comrade Literature that distinguishes it from printed novels will also be considered in relation to the *tongzhi* subculture.

Although the online format of these Comrade texts make it difficult to determine an exact point of origin, this thesis defines them as texts from China because the stories all revolve around *tongzhi* from the Mainland. It is important here to also distinguish that by "online literature," this thesis refers to works of fiction published on the internet by both amateur and professional writers. These stories are more akin to works of conventional literature published in

a new media format rather than works of electronic art.² Moreover, this thesis is interested in male same-sex narratives contextualized within China's particular sociopolitical environment for homosexuality and queer discourse. The bulk of online Comrade Literature consists of male *tongzhi* stories with diverse sub-genres, where portrayals of same-sex relations often speak to broader issues of ethical and political agency.³ These stories therefore extend beyond the gay male community in their appeal to other sexual minorities and even straight populations, especially young heterosexual women (Cristini 2007; Huang 2010).⁴ Despite the overt focus on male *tongzhi* stories, the representation and position of women in relation to these gay male texts nonetheless remains central to the present discussion.

[The Comrade Subculture: On Defining “Tongzhi”]

The term “Comrade” (同志 *tongzhi*) has a long history, and its meaning has altered over the years. “*Tongzhi*” literally translates as “same will” or “of the same intent.” Originating from the early Qin Dynasty (221 BC – 206 BC), “*tongzhi*” was initially a phrase referring to people who shared the same ethics and ideals (Scotton and Zhu 1983). Its association with Chinese

² In other words, I do not refer to instances where hyperlinks, video, and audio clips are used to create new forms of storytelling, as scholars such as N. Katherine Hayles in *Writing Machines* (2002) have discussed.

³ While Comrade stories with lesbian themes are on the rise, it is beyond the purview of this thesis to conduct a close analysis of both male and female *tongzhi* stories. Moreover, male and female same-sex relations in China have divergent historical backgrounds and contemporary contexts, where male homosexuality is significantly more visible (Gao 2001; Kam 2013). Scholars have noted that while gay men confront a legacy of authoritarian conflict and public scorn, lesbian women were considered negligible in the patriarchal familial organization of traditional China (Ruan and Bullough 1992; Tsai 1987). Recent studies have also indicated that contemporary female *tongzhi* narratives are more aligned with feminist issues and advocate for specific aspects of sexual liberalization (e.g.: reproductive rights), whereas male *tongzhi* stories take up counter-discourses of broader ethical and political agency (Sang 2003; Yao 2010).

⁴ Studies have indicated a trend in popular culture for young heterosexual women to be the primary fan base for Boy Love stories, especially manifest in slash fiction genres (Penley 1992; Huang 2010). These fiction consist of male-male homoerotic stories and are, by and large, written by women for women (Levi *et al.* 2008; Woledge 2005). This is not to say that the general subject of intimacy between men is the preoccupation of heterosexual women alone. With *tongzhi* stories, the sexuality of readers and writers are diverse, indicating the narrative's appeal to individuals beyond the gay male community.

political discourse strengthened when Sun Yat-Sen, leader of the 1911 Chinese Democratic Revolution to overthrow the Qing Dynasty monarchy, deployed the phrase in his works (Chou 2000). In a famous quote from his will, Sun used “*tongzhi*” to urge his followers to continue the revolution: “The revolution hasn't succeeded yet. *Tongzhi*, keep up the good work! [革命尚未成功，同志仍须努力。 *Geming shangwei chenggong, tongzhi rengxu nuli*]” (1925, qtd. in Wong and Zhang 2000, 262). To date, Sun is respected by Chinese of different political convictions across Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the Mainland as the founder of modern China.

During the Communist Revolution (1920s – 1949), “*tongzhi*” acquired enhanced political and revolutionist connotations when the term signaled equality, respect, solidarity, and camaraderie amongst all revolutionaries (Wong 2005). The PRC’s founding in 1949 also witnessed the Communist Party’s default use of “*tongzhi*” to address everyone regardless of age, gender, class, or occupation (Tsai 1988). The expression emphasized equality for all Chinese and a shared goal in building a socialist China (Wong and Zhang 2001). In 1989, however, “*tongzhi*” was first used in the Chinese title of the inaugural Hong Kong Gay and Lesbian Film Festival (香港第一界同志电影节 *xianggang diyi jie tongzhi dianying jie*) as a term for same-sex desire. After the festival, *tongzhi* was widely adopted by gay and lesbian organizations in Hong Kong and was then exported to Taiwan, mainland China, and diasporic Chinese communities (Zhou 1997). Hence, although “*tongzhi*” still resonates with the socialist ideal for an equal society, the term has been transformed into the most popular word referring to Chinese homosexuals, especially male homosexuals (Wong 2008).⁵ In contrast, the medical term “homosexual” (同性

⁵ It is also important to note that, unlike “homosexual” or “heterosexual,” *tongzhi* counteracts the negative stigma of homosexuality in mainstream Chinese society and pluralizes sexuality. The word itself is not restricted in definition by the gender of one’s erotic subject (*tongzhi* can denote either male or female) and describes a range of non-heteronormative sexual practices (including transgender and bisexual behaviors). In this way, *tongzhi* does not privilege the self or the individual, both in reference to gender and sexuality and a broader social context (Bao 2011).

恋 *tongxinglian*) is rarely used within the queer community as it bears the clinical implications of a mental disease (Kong 2011, 14).

As Chou Wah-shan (2000) elucidates, the reappropriation of *tongzhi* is recognized for its “positive cultural references, gender neutrality, desexualization of the stigma of homosexuality, politics beyond the homo-hetero duality, and use as an indigenous cultural identity for integrating the sexual into the social” (2). In other words, *tongzhi* integrates issues of sexuality, politics, and culture in Chinese society. The term breaks down the ideological barrier between China’s revolutionary history and contemporary gay culture. By referring to themselves as *tongzhi* instead, Chinese homosexuals queer one of the most revered and liberating titles from the very regime that oppresses them.

Thus, “*tongzhi*” represents an indigenous sexual identity that appropriates rather than confronts an individual’s familial-cultural identity (Chou 2000, 3). As Chou further argues, the term represents “a strategy of inclusion and exclusion,” one that “expresses both the sexual identity of difference and a political identity of sameness,” inherently advocating for equality on the basis of sexual difference in modern China (Chou 2000, 4). Furthermore, the lack of official reference to homosexuality by the Chinese government after decriminalization fails to formally institutionalize it, thereby enabling homosexuals to construct their own community (Farrer 2006). To this end, “*tongzhi*” appropriates the socialist term to shape a homosexual identity rooted in Chineseness distinct from Western “global gay” identities (Bao 2011).⁶

⁶ Although *tongzhi* discourse has been seen as a Chinese equivalent to Western “queer politics,” many scholars and the Comrade community assert that they are fundamentally different (Bao 2011). The Chinese term for queer is its phonetic transliteration “*ku’er*” (酷儿), which plays a homophone pun on “cool” (酷 *ku*) in Mandarin to mean “cool kid.” In this respect, the original meaning of “queer” in English, where the term challenges the homo/heterosexual dichotomy of the hegemonic sexual order, is lost in translation (Wong and Zhang 2001:257). The subversive connotation of “queer” is erased in the Chinese translation, where “*ku’er*” is instead limited to its emphasis on “coolness.” Additionally, “queer” remains associated with the pathological term “homosexuality,” as they are both received as foreign constructs in the Chinese vernacular (Wong and Zhang 2000). However, it can also be argued that this rerouted translation of “queer” to “cool kid” in the Chinese actually appropriately denotes Western notions of queerness, where being “cool” is often partially defined by an ambiguously radical sexuality.

Since the beginning of the postsocialist era, however, there has been a steady elimination of the term “*tongzhi*” used in China’s public discourse – an active attempt to stifle the rise of an LGBT culture together with an expunction of the nation’s socialist past. As Lisa Rofel articulates in *Other Modernities: Gendered Yearnings in China After Socialism* (1999), gender and sexuality lie at the core of imagining a postsocialist modernity that will liberate repressed desires in China. The forgetting, or rather, conscious elimination, of China’s socialist past is central to this objective. As such, the conflation of the multiple meanings of *tongzhi* (especially “revolutionary” and “gay”) is symptomatic of China’s postsocialist condition; a condition characterized by the continuing existence – and gradual erasure – of China’s socialist past and the State’s active incorporation of neoliberal capitalism (Rofel 1999, 13). Along these lines, “*tongzhi*” signifies divergent sexual subjectivities and social imaginaries produced in this shift in China (Jian 1997).

Nonetheless, the Chinese government precludes university students in Mainland China from working on topics related to queer studies or homosexuality, discouraging research in these fields (Yao 2010). Consequently, research on gender and sexuality, particularly queer topics, are often not considered respectable academic fields by Chinese students (Huang 2009). Moreover, scholars based in China have little access to critical resources to investigate the *tongzhi* community and same-sex practices (Yao 2010). While there are several compilations of *tongzhi* stories from Mainland China (e.g.: Chou 1996; Lao 2011), no books that conduct literary analysis on these texts have yet been published. Research on Comrade stories presently subsists in the limited form of working papers or university theses and dissertations (e.g.: Cristini 2005; Ke 2006; Wang 2005).

[Cultural and Legislative Environment for Homosexuality in Modern China]

The founding of the PRC resulted in the government's fervent elimination of all non-procreative, non-marital associations to establish the nuclear family as the bedrock of socialist renewal (Sieber 2001). Under Communist rule, the “hooligan” law (流氓罪 *liumangzui*) enacted in the 1957 Official Penal Code made sodomy a criminal act, along with other behaviors considered undesirable by the State.⁷ In 1984, homosexuality was also classified as a clinical condition in the first Chinese *Classification and Diagnostic Criteria of Mental Diseases*. Any persons suspected of same-sex behavior could be arrested and sent to prisons, labor reform camps, electric therapy clinics, or even executed (Lau and Ng 1989; Wan 2001).

Today, China's laws neither prohibit nor protect homosexuals: the abolishment of the “hooligan” law in 1997 officially decriminalized homosexuality (Liu 2005). In 2001, homosexuality was also removed from the formal list of mental disorders (Ma 2011). When a government survey placed the homosexual population at 15 million in 2004, the Chinese State acknowledged the presence of homosexuals for the first time (Gong 2009). More recent estimates have ranged from 50 to 100 million (Li 2009; Wen 2011). Despite this apparent progress, the political status of homosexuals in China is ambiguous and they still face widespread legal discrimination (Cao 2000; Gong 2009).⁸

The Chinese State continues to see sexual openness (*xingkaifang*) as a threat to socialist morality and socio-political stability; consequently, various legal statutes indirectly target homosexuals and suppress gay activities (Sigley 2006, 71; Wan 2008). The Social Order Statute and laws on harmful sexual acts are still used to detain homosexuals. These laws criminalize behaviors that are “deleterious to fine customs” (妨

⁷ Translations of excerpts from other relevant official laws and statutes in Appendix I.

⁸ Refer to Appendix II for a brief chronology of significant political events affecting male homosexuals in China.

害善良风俗 *fanghai shanliang fengsu*) or “deleterious to moral decency” (妨害风化 *fanghai fenghua*) and order that citizens in a “diseased” (病态 *bingtai*) or “abnormal state” (变态 *biantai*) be detained (Sanders 2006). Another example is the Criminal Law 301 for “Crowd Licentiousness,” under which homosexuals are often prosecuted, which can result in a five-year prison term (Godwin 2010).

In general, however, the preferred government tactic is to act as though homosexuality does not exist, an approach expressed as “Not Encouraging, Not Discouraging, Not Promoting” (不支持, 不反对, 不提倡 *buzhichi, bufandui, butichang*) (Tan 1998). However, this cautious policy is not neutral, and the combination of official policy and official silence creates a homophobic environment where homosexuals are deprived of legal protection (Cao 2000; Gong 2009). Consequently, Chinese homosexuals face discrimination where it is near impossible for individuals to be publicly gay and retain respectable employment (Berry 1996, 40; Chen 2002). As Li Yinhe (2006), Chinese sociologist and pro-gay activist, states:

[T]he most serious threat to homosexual conduct between consenting male adults comes ... from social prejudice, which has resulted in the arbitrary imposition of administrative penalties, police arrest, and Party disciplinary legal sanctions (82).

When asked to comment on the above statement, interviewees in Beijing concurred that social prejudices present a greater concern to the *tongzhi* community than actual physical harassment or police arrest.

24-year-old Christopher Wong,⁹ who works as a consultant, stated that more Chinese people need to be informed about homosexuality before collective action tackling discrimination can be successful. In his own words:

I am *tongzhi*... I don't believe that my sexual preferences are in any way improper or unnatural. Same-sex love does not cause any social harm... But social prejudice harms us

⁹ Names of all *tongzhi* interviewees have been changed to preserve anonymity.

greatly... I am still in love with my first boyfriend... [But] I don't feel lucky that I have found love. I feel terrible pressure, and a terrible shame that others force upon me... I think it is exceptionally important that there are more reports, articles, and personal stories in the media about the injustices we face. I believe that getting organized to form a unified *tongzhi* front and actively engaging in political life is the only way to tackle social prejudice and protect *tongzhi*. More people need to be made aware that homosexuality is natural.¹⁰

Given that the authoritarian government strictly regulates all media and print publications, people in China have limited access to information about homosexuality or human rights through conventional channels (Godwin 2010). However, the internet now provides many Chinese with an accessible and anonymous medium to more freely publish, read, and share texts, communicating with others in real time on a range of issues.

[The Internet: Facilitating Communication and Subversive Communities]

The Chinese government imposes strict prohibition of all sexually explicit materials. Under Article 5.7 of the “Rules for the Control of and Punishments Concerning Public Security” introduced in 1949, persons associated with writing or possessing homoerotic materials are charged with “disrupting public order,” fined, and detained. In response to Western pornographic material being smuggled into China in the late 1970s, the government enforced “Regulations on Severely Banning Pornography” in 1986 to emphasize that pornography – especially homoerotic materials – “poison[ed] people’s minds, induc[ed] crimes ... and must be severely banned” (Diamond 1999, 12). Since 1997, regulations imposed by the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television have consistently banned any discussion of homosexuality (Chen 2002). Today, the 2004 Official Notice on Ensuring that Broadcasting Censorship Strengthens and

¹⁰ All *tongzhi* interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese and quotations are the author’s own translations. Additionally, unless otherwise indicated, citations of Chinese secondary sources appear as the author’s own translations.

Corrects the Moral Character of Adolescents¹¹ is still in effect, enforcing that “any details containing ... pornography, sex, ... sexual abnormalities, [and] homosexuality ... should be cut and corrected” (Mountford 2010, 10). Additionally, Article 68 of the “Penalties for Administration of Public Security Law” adopted in 2005 states that persons guilty of “produc[ing], duplicat[ing], ... [or] disseminating any pornographic information, including books ... and pictures, ... through computer information networks, telephones or other means of communications” shall be detained and fined. These laws have been used to silence communities the State finds undesirable, particularly when reinforced by strict censorship of all conventional media outlets (Ruan 1991; Abbott 2004). Although the first Comrade novel was published locally in 2004, books with homosexual content remain scarce on the Mainland (Cheng 2004; Li 2008).¹²

China’s first internet connection was established in 1994 and proliferated at an astounding rate, making the online circulation of Comrade narratives possible. Presently, China has the largest population of netizens with approximately 564 million internet users (IWS 2012; Van de Werff 2010). Studies reveal that online technologies have substantially increased the amount young people read and write over the past two decades (Zhang 2003, 230-55; CINIC 2008, 29).¹³ Cyberspace offers new possibilities for mass communication and interaction, of which chat rooms and discussion boards have become especially popular (Zheng 2008). Through

¹¹ 广播影视加强和改进未成年人思想道德建设的实施方案通知

¹² The issue of finding books on queer topics frequently comes up at *tongzhi* book club discussions (Discussion1 2012). Many *tongzhi* lament the difficulty of finding books on homosexuality or other queer topics in local book stores. Books printed in Chinese, particularly editions from Hong Kong or Taiwan, were the hardest to find. *Tongzhi* in the PRC frequently get their books when they travel to Hong Kong or ask friends to bring specific titles back for them (“Notes” 2012).

¹³ In 2003, a CNNIC study estimated that of the 420 million Internet users in China as of 2010, 70% of the users were under 30, and more than 40% were university educated (Guo 2003). In the past few years, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) has also estimated that more than 50 million internet users in China read blogs daily (Qiang 2011). Members of this young and educated demographic are potential opinion leaders should they choose to engage in online citizenship. More importantly, they are also the primary labor force and consumers of China (Guo 2003; Qiang 2011).

the internet, Chinese people circumvent State-controlled media and transcend cultural and national borders to communicate in real time without in-person contact (Zhang 2009).

Additionally, 24-year-old Calvin Hong describes the *tongzhi* cyberspace as one that provides unique community-specific interactive modes:

The *tongzhi* online community is different from other virtual communities... People get very attached through interactions with other *tongzhi* and participation in the community. For example, *tongzhi* have our own private ‘Facebook’: Feizan. All *tongzhi* can join and many people use it the same way as a regular Facebook, ... but as a social media platform, it is much more intimate than Renren or Weibo¹⁴ that’s open to everyone... On Feizan, you can post about things that you don’t want your straight friends or colleagues to know, because you can be sure that only *tongzhi* have access. You can ask questions about homosexuality or any other ... sensitive issues and get answers or advice from other gays. I think this support network is very important... Before the internet, so many gays bottled up all their anxieties and frustrations as they had nobody to talk to, but now we can conveniently meet like-minded people online... *Tongzhi* also use a variety of applications to get in touch with each other. There is ... a sort of ‘GPS’ for you to connect with other *tongzhi* nearby who are also using the same application... With all of these unique ways to meet each other that most non-*tongzhi* are completely unaware about, you really do bond with other *tongzhi* around you, even if you never actually meet them in person...

As this interviewee suggests, the gay subculture has its own set of disciplinary protocols and tacit rules of conduct for acceptable behaviors that define the boundaries of the local *tongzhi* community.

With regard to the online *tongzhi* presence, numerous studies have noted the rapid emergence of a web-based gay community since the 1990s (e.g.: Jiang 2005; Martin 2008). By 2005, there were more than 500 Chinese gay websites that provided information, facilitated connections, and established a *tongzhi* community for Chinese homosexuals (Cui 2008).¹⁵ Fran Martin, a renowned scholar on queer Chinese culture, posits that this online gay subculture is a strategic sphere “to challenge the hegemonies of local regimes of sexual and gender regulation”

¹⁴ As Facebook and Twitter are blocked in Mainland China, local Chinese websites Renren and Weibo serve similar functions.

¹⁵ For a list and screenshot of some of these websites, refer to Appendix III.

and “provide imaginative resources for urgent and intensely local struggles” (Martin 2003a, 21). Nonetheless, China’s government censorship protocols banning homosexual content extend to the internet. The Golden Shield censorship project, also labeled “The Great Firewall,” and numerous State Regulations on pornography explicitly prohibit online references to homosexuality (Zheng 2008). These repressive policies have restricted the virtual LGBT presence, forcing many *tongzhi* websites to shut down and silencing discussion about homosexuality (Fletcher 2008; Jiang 2011).¹⁶

Despite – or perhaps because of – these restrictions, *tongzhi* find novel ways to circumvent censorship and share information about sensitive issues through fiction, often using metaphorical language and cultural allusions (Mo 2013). Along these lines, Comrade Literature provides insight into gay struggles stemming from discriminatory policies and cultural biases in contemporary China (Jiang 2005). These narratives frequently contain realistic and even (auto)biographical elements, serving an essential communicative function in addition to its aesthetic aspects as an artistic literary product (Cristini 2005). However, it is important to note that Chinese fiction concerned with the imbrications of homoerotic desire and political discourse actually traces back to the early 20th century, before the *tongzhi* genre was established. As literary scholar David Der-Wei Wang has pointed out, political novels such as Jiang Gui’s (姜贵) *Double Sun* 《重阳》 (1927) pre-date Bai Xianrong’s *Crystal Boys* (1983) by several decades, yet have clear homoerotic overtones (Wang 1998, 105).¹⁷ Nonetheless, this thesis investigates

¹⁶ In June 2011, Douban, one of China’s more liberal social networking sites and once a popular online platform for the *tongzhi* community, received government pressure to delete all posts with LGBT content. This action underscores the State’s repressive stance against discussion of homosexuality on the internet (Jiang 2011).

¹⁷ *Double Sun* 《重阳》 (1927) was a huge political novel on the first Chinese Communist Revolution and tells the intricate relationship between two young men with different political backgrounds during this radical period. This novel definitely addresses the homoerotic dimension of Chinese political imaginary in the early 1900s (Wang 1998; Pers. Comm. 2012).

online Chinese homosexual fiction in contemporary China as a new media genre distinct from print novels.

Based on an anonymous survey posted on the top three Chinese gay websites in September 2012, 84 of 263 respondents (approximately 32%) who indicated that they read homosexual *tongzhi* stories also declared that they were heterosexual (“Survey” 2012). Furthermore, almost all of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 25. Given that netizens do not necessarily report personal information truthfully, it is problematic to take these statistics at face value. Regardless, the mainstreaming of *tongzhi* culture and online Comrade Literature is a compelling development in Chinese popular culture. The phenomenon of heterosexual Chinese women reading male homoerotic fiction has recently become fairly commonplace: the term *funü* (腐女),¹⁸ or “decadent woman,” connotes an avid female fan of *tongzhi* stories. Another colloquial term, *zhitongzhi* (直同志), or “straight *tongzhi*,” is also used to refer to heterosexuals who participate in the *tongzhi* subculture (“Notes” 2012).

While more conclusive research on this trend is still needed, the idea that heterosexual Chinese youth constitutes a substantial readership of homoerotic *tongzhi* fiction highlights an interesting conundrum. Why would heterosexual college students actively visit gay websites to read homosexual stories in a nation where non-heteronormative behavior is undesirable? What is it about Comrade fiction that draws these students to consume, circulate, and even create their own homoerotic stories? How do *tongzhi* stories influence their readers and shape their perspectives on homosexuality? To better understand these questions, the *tongzhi* community and their literature deserve attention as a revolutionary force influencing Chinese society on issues of politics, sex, and gender.

¹⁸ The term itself translates literally to “corrupt woman” or “decayed woman.” It is an imported term from Japan, where *fujoshi* or “腐女子” in contemporary Japanese culture refers to women who read BL (BoyLove) or male-male love stories.

[Contemporary Scholarship on Homosexuality in Mainland China]

Entering the 1990s, China witnessed dramatic changes in its popular culture with a surge a surge of queer novels, films, and art work propelled by the rise of electronic media and technology in everyday life (Berry *et al.* 2003; He 2008). At the same time, Western institutions such as Amnesty International and the World Health Organization began placing pressure on China's government to adopt more liberalized attitudes towards sexuality (Huang 2009; IGLHRC 1999). The semi-public culture of gay bars, restaurants, and cruising zones, as well as the continued efforts of gay activists, has been prominent in Chinese popular culture (Wan 2001; Cui 2008). This tide of homosexual visibility across Chinese society prompted the scholarly world to pay greater attention to the *tongzhi* community (Berry *et al.* 2003; Sullivan 2001).¹⁹

Contemporary scholarship on homosexuality in China can be grouped into three different fields of study according to their order of emergence: 1) early works that explore the history of Chinese same-sex relations (e.g.: Lau and Ng 1989; Ng 1989; Samshasha 1997); 2) social science research that investigate China's political position towards homosexuality (e.g.: Fang 1995; Li 2006); and 3) literature on queer cultural products vis-à-vis China's *tongzhi* movement (Chou 2001; Rofel 2007).

I. Research on China's History of Same-Sex Relations

The earliest modern Chinese scholarly works on same-sex relations were written by intellectuals who labeled homosexuality as a psychological disease (Liu 1987, qtd. in Jackson and Sullivan 2001).²⁰ A key representation is *The Sexual Life of Mankind* (1934), written by

¹⁹ Notably, *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) by Chinese director Ang Lee attracted significant attention when it was circulated on pirated DVDs and prompted people to pay attention to Comrade films and novels as well (Higgins 2009; Jiang 2005).

²⁰ Scholars have speculated that after Western powers invaded and defeated China in the mid-nineteenth century, "progressive" Chinese intellectuals looked to Westernization as a mode for national advancement (Ruan 1988; Samshasha 1997). At this time, homosexuality was regarded as a mental disease in the West, and the Chinese

famous sex educator Cheng Hao, where he describes “homosexuality as gender perversity” and an “abnormal, dirty, and inhuman bad habit” (133-4). Other works published during this time similarly endorse the government’s perspective on homosexuality as a pathological obscenity worthy of criminalization (Hinsch 1990; Kang 2009). In contrast, contemporary investigations of medical texts have consistently ruled out the possibility that homoerotic desire was perceived as a pathological illness prior to the Republican era (1911-1949) (Furth 1988).

Given the extent of homophobia that pervades contemporary Chinese society, it is not surprising that most would find it hard to believe China’s long-standing tradition of same-sex practices (Brown 2008; Ching 2010). Historians have documented that same-sex relations were tolerated in ancient China until the 13th century (e.g.: Chou 1997; Zhang 2001). The Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, in particular, produced an abundance of erotic art and literature (Humana and Wu 1984; Shiren 1984). These artifacts reveal that classical China did not divide people into the homo/hetero binary characteristic to the modern world. Sexual behaviors, including same-sex activities, stemmed from a set of preferences rather than an innate sexuality (Chiang 2010; Tsai 1987). Same-sex acts were a familiar aspect of ancient China’s social hierarchy where upper-class males sexually dominated social inferiors, including male servants (Lau and Ng 1989; Wu 2004). Because classical Chinese lacked a medical or scientific term comparable to the Western constructs of “homosexuality” or “homosexual,” extra care must be taken to distinguish male same-sex practices in the traditional Chinese context from the conception of homosexuality in the modern understanding (Kong 2011).

subsequently adopted a pathological view of same-sex behaviors (Ruan 1991). Although recent scholarship has contested the mainstream belief that homosexuality was “imported” from the West, the notion that same-sex sexual behavior was not seriously persecuted in Ancient China remains a general consensus (Wu 2003; Farr 2007).

Homosexuality as a discrete sexual identity simply did not exist *per se*, and it was only with the influence of Western ideology that the term was named and incorporated into the Chinese lexicon in the early 1900s (Brown 2008; Chou 1997).

Before translation, euphemisms were used to refer to same-sex attraction, often originating from classical Chinese texts that allude to homoeroticism (Zhang 2001; 2008).²¹ In *Passions of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China* (1992), Bret Hinsch traces the history of such euphemisms that are still recognized in contemporary Chinese society, including “the cut sleeve” (断袖 *duanxiu*), “the split peach” (分桃 *fentaoyao*), and “male practice” (男风 *nanfeng*).²² Though identified as the first serious English language treatment of same-sex behaviors in pre-modern China, reviewers have criticized this book for being “unidimensional” and “deceptive” in its conclusion that China’s twentieth-century homophobia resulted solely from the adoption of Western sexual discourse (Dikötter 1992, 170; Williams 1994, 87). Charlotte Furth, Chinese historian, also questioned Hinsch’s passive acceptance of the Western liberationist dialectic of tolerance versus repression without questioning whether its application would be appropriate in the Chinese context (1991, 912). Because of this, Hinsch’s book overlooks the complexity of China’s Imperial past to provide a reductive conclusion that twentieth-century China’s homophobia resulted from the adoption of Western sexual discourse.

After the Cultural Revolution in the 1980s, scholars began investigating China’s changing attitudes towards homosexuality, but most of these works assert that the evolution of a stigmatized queer identity resulted from China’s exposure to Western influences (Lau and Ng 1989; Tsai 1987). Samshasha’s *History of Homosexuality in China* (1984) is a case in point: the book traces China’s history of homoerotic love from the Zhou dynasty (11th century BC to 221

²¹ A list of notable classical Chinese novels with homoerotic content is included in Appendix IV.

²² For a list of other euphemisms, refer to Appendix V.

BC) to the early 1980s, concluding that homophobia was imported from the West. More recently, scholars have challenged this view by pointing out that the emphasis on “homophobia” as an imported construct may be due to underlying political agendas (Kong 2011). They propose that the persecution of same-sex acts formed part of a local political campaign to preserve a strict hierarchal social order (Ng 1989). By blaming Western influences, authors deflected criticism of the government’s role in having oppressed homosexuals and engendered a more positive perspective of Chinese politics (Bullough and Ruan 1989).

Matthew Sommer’s work on *Sex, Law, and Society in Late Imperial China* (2000) offers research in support of this alternate view, arguing that Chinese homophobia cannot purely be attributed to Western influences. His study takes into account sexual regulations throughout China’s ancient and imperial history, examining diverse legal materials, including political commentaries and court cases, to determine changes in how same-sex behaviors were dealt with. Through in-depth analyses of historical documents, citing both legal evidence and cultural sources (i.e.: popular stories, personal narratives, etc.), Sommer posits that the changing societal norms and political attitudes towards same-sex relations were due to heightened conservatism during Late Imperial China, before the influence of Western ideology. This topic requires more comprehensive investigation, but it is important to recognize that contrary to the “homophobic” environment of modern China, traditional Chinese society did not seriously persecute same-sex practices.

II. Social Science Studies on Chinese Homosexuality and Tongzhi Identity Politics

Social science research on homosexuality is diverse, ranging across work in the fields of anthropology, sociology, and political philosophy. These works challenge the criminalization of

homosexual acts and respond to increasing exposure to more liberal Western beliefs. They address two main issues: 1) the political and legal status of gay rights in China, and 2) the evolving cultural and societal attitudes towards the *tongzhi* movement.

The dominant paradigm for research on government policies towards homosexuality in China is from the bio-medical field, where studies focus on determining appropriate parameters for legal regulation of same-sex conduct to address HIV/AIDS (e.g.: Nielands *et al.* 2007; Lu and Essex 2004; Qiu 1997). More generally, Chinese scholars such as Tan Dazheng (1998) and Ma Ping (2010) have reviewed legal cases and highlighted government attempts to repress homosexuality through *ad hoc* enforcement (e.g.: where officials used indirect sanctions to detain homosexuals). In general, however, studies addressing gay rights in China make no reference to such evidence (Gao 2003; Wan 2008).

Another emphasis in social science research examines Chinese homosexual identity formation and queer politics associated with the nascent *tongzhi* culture (Jackson and Sullivan 2001). These studies employ interviews, participant observations, ethnography, and life narratives as qualitative methods of inquiry (Chou 2000). Ethnographic research on homosexuality in China typically stresses the hidden nature of gay Chinese relationships due to heteronormative social pressures (Fang 1995; Sullivan 2006). Academics have also questioned what it means to be queer in an increasingly global environment, where Westernization has affected Chinese cultural attitudes, social responses, and government policies towards the *tongzhi* community (Engebretsen 2008; Pan 2006). In the late 1980s, psychology discourse began to frame queer identity within China's rapidly changing socioeconomic environment and political framework (Simon 2001). *Their World* (1992), by Li Yinhe and Wang Xiaobo, stands out as the pioneering work addressing social conditions of the Chinese homosexual population.

The book provided insight into the challenges facing gays, prompting other researchers to investigate the homosexual population in contemporary China.

Essays by a range of activists, artists, and scholars further discuss how globalization has become integral to changing perceptions of gender and sexuality within China (Liu and Rofel 2010; Wong 2012). Texts have proposed variable perspectives on how Chinese politics shapes the growing *tongzhi* population (Ruan 1988; Chiang 2010). For example, Loretta Ho's fieldwork in *Gay and Lesbian Subculture in Urban China* (2010) collected personal narratives to examine how the urban Chinese homosexual identity has responded to State politics. She concludes that the Chinese queer identity is "paradoxical" as being "open and decentred" yet still mirrors and "[conforms] to State control" (Ho 2010, 138). Nevertheless, contemporary Chinese attitudes toward sexuality are rapidly changing (Farrer 2002). Since the advent of the Chinese internet in mid-1990s, a growing number of studies have focused on the gay online subculture and underground *tongzhi* communities emerging in modern China (e.g.: Ching 2010; Berry *et. al* 2003).

III. *Discourse Exploring Queer Cultural Products and Homosexuality in the PRC*

Although literary publications evaluating themes of homosexuality in fiction are increasing, most are mere synopses of the stories themselves with only superficial analysis. For instance, the psychologist Zhang Mingyuan published an article in 1981 addressing the portrayal of homosexuality in Cao Xueqin's eighteenth-century classic Chinese novel, *A Dream of Red Mansions* (1791). Zhang wrote that homosexuality was "extremely odd" but that science had yet to make "a final decision on whether or not it should be considered an illness," thereby questioning the prevailing public rhetoric asserting homosexuality as a pathological disease (qtd. in Wan 2001, 50). Pioneering scholars thus focused on "discovering" and "uncovering" the

existence of homosexuals in China as sexed beings devoid of political subjectivity (Hua 1985; ven der Werff 2010).

Critiques of contemporary Chinese queer literature often interpret homosexual themes as a literary trope describing the conflict between communism and capitalism in a globalizing world (Liu 2010; Wong 2012). These reviews essentially ignore the homoerotic content itself; representations of homosexuality are said to allegorize the transformation of traditional Chinese principles in a Westernizing environment (Chou 2001; Yuan 1991). For example, essays on Bai Xianying's *Crystal Boys* (1983), have disregarded the novel's explicit portrayals of homosexual life (Martin 2003a; Yeh 1998). Instead, they see the text as a political allegory for relations between Taiwan and mainland China, or emphasize the ambivalence of father-son relationships where the traditional Chinese family structure is challenged (e.g.: Huang 1996; Chang and Wang 1995; Chang 1993, 98-9).

In the past decade, however, queer discourse has offered critical views about how male homosexual themes in contemporary Chinese novels problematize sociocultural pressures for all individuals to conform to heteronormativity (Wu 2004; Kang 2009). These works mobilize queer and feminist studies to investigate how depictions of non-normative gender and sexuality contest patriarchal paradigms that mandate heterosexuality (Jian 1997; Farrer 2006). Literary reviews have attempted preliminary study of the *tongzhi* identity in fiction from mainland China, but homoerotic texts are still subjected to reductive readings, particularly when they contain graphic sexual content (Kong 2004; Liu 2010). PRC critics often interpret these stories as soft pornography without any literary value, or denigrate them as self-indulgent and socially irresponsible (Wang 2005).

[Online Comrade Literature: Virtual Fiction and Political Storytelling]

Insofar as Comrade narratives articulate the complex dynamics of homosexual relationships in a heterosexist society, critics have started discussing queer Chinese novels with reference to the *tongzhi* movement (Sieber 2001; Martin 2008; Huang 2010). For example, Raymond Wei-cheng Chu (1997) writes on *Crystal Boys* and how issues of gender, queerness, family, and nation traverse the text in relation to the nascent *tongzhi* culture. Petrus Liu's 2008 essay on "*Paper Marriage* and Transnational Queer Politics" also critiques the novel in terms of sociopolitical change affecting homosexuals in China. Additionally, there is a growing body of research concerning the development of local and international (sexual) politics in China, where scholars such as Loretta Ho (2010) and Elisabeth Engebretsen (2008) have inquired as to how Chinese queer narratives fit into China's overall sociopolitical context. However, these studies take an ethnographic approach to Comrade narratives and do not conduct literary analysis.

In urban China, the gay community is effectively invisible to the general public. Gay groups are low-profile and cannot publicize themselves as organizations associated with homosexuality. Instead, they must register in the guise of HIV/AIDS institutes or social groups (e.g.: book clubs) (Carlson 2010). Even then, they lack government support and stability. Although many Westerners perceive Beijing to be relatively gay-friendly due to the increasing number of gay bars and clubs, *tongzhi* lament that these seemingly liberating semi-public areas were ultimately just "enlarged closets" that homosexuals are still confined to ("Notes" 2012). Most gay Chinese resent the misconceptions caused by lack of information and are discouraged that despite China's globalization, gays remain marginalized, unable to fit rigid State ideals. Many end up forcing themselves into loveless heterosexual marriages and conforming to societal expectations (Wen 2011; Chen 2011). This environment creates a community of ostracized

individuals paranoid of having their homosexuality exposed in fear of social and political ramifications (van der Werff 2010).

Nevertheless, contemporary attitudes towards gender and sexuality in Chinese society are rapidly changing (Farrer 2002). At a *tongzhi* book club event, one participant remarked:

People are now more receptive to the idea that not everybody is meant to be heterosexual. However, it is frustrating that you can never hear honest discussion about sexuality in the media. I ... look online to learn more about homosexuality and how to cope with being gay in China... I have tried reading books and articles in English, but they ... do not speak to the experiences of homosexuals in China... [In contrast,] many Comrade stories can be realistic [and easy to read]... What draws me to them is ... the idea that, through fiction, I can temporarily forget about who I'm supposed to be to experience different kinds of emotions and love... Although they are fiction, they give me some insight into how I can conduct my own homosexuality... [and] the nature of same-sex relations. ... It would be great if everybody read *tongzhi* stories so that there can be more tolerance of homosexuality in China (“Discussion1” 2012).

This man's perspective not only highlights that *tongzhi* often rely on the internet as a source of information about homosexuality, but also reveals how Comrade stories provide a voyeuristic lens through which modern Chinese people review their own lives. To further existing research on online Comrade Literature, this thesis is organized in three chapters. Each chapter takes up different aspects related to how private *tongzhi* desire becomes visible in public space through gay-themed stories on the Chinese internet: via romance, *bildungsroman*, and war narrative structures. The central concern is how online male Comrade stories relate to the wider framework of hegemonic norms and queer discourse in contemporary China.

The first chapter examines gender performance in *tongzhi* romance (typically labeled 耽美 *danmei* or “Boy Love”/“BL”) narratives. This chapter conducts a close analysis of two online Comrade stories, “Beijing Story” 《北京故事》 (1996) and “The Illusive Mind” 《迷思》 (2003), respectively published before and after homosexuality in China was decriminalized in 1997. The analysis reveals how these texts portray fluid gender relations and identities of male

homosexual characters to destabilize hegemonic gender norms in Chinese society. Both Comrade stories assimilate same-sex to opposite-sex behaviors by positioning homosexual male relations within the heterosexual paradigm. Concurrently, however, they destabilize hegemonic norms of gender and sexuality by accentuating homosexual relations as distinct from and perhaps more ideal than dominant heterosexual practices in modern China. Drawing upon Judith Butler's notion of gender performativity, this chapter examines the conceptual tension where same-sex and opposite-sex practices are simultaneously homologized yet differentiated. These contrary tendencies coincide in the literary (re)productions of performative masculinity and femininity reinscribed within male *tongzhi* relations, etching a space for homosexuality to emerge.

The second chapter takes up queer abjection in Comrade *bildungsroman* (often referred to as “Campus Love *Tongzhi* Stories” 校园同志小说 *xiaoyuan tongzhi xiaoshuo*). This chapter examines “Huizi” 《辉子》 (1999) as a queerly-inflected *bildungsroman* depicting young protagonists as their sense of homosexual identity develops, infusing the Comrade story with the twofold potentiality of “coming-of-age” and “coming-out.” By portraying the narrator's self-conscious sense of identity as one that is in a constant flux of mimesis, integration, and divergence, the story reveals the fictive structure of homo/hetero and masculine/feminine binaries in patriarchal Chinese society. This chapter draws upon Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982) and Judith Butler's subsequent work on abjection in *Bodies that Matter* (1993) to attend to how the “hooligan” body in “Huizi” is presented as abject, recasting the body as an active site that can circumvent regulatory norms. Ultimately, however, “Huizi” rejects a queer utopia in favor of exposing the formidable and perhaps insurmountable obstacles along the path towards accepting a homosexual identity. Rather

than a normative identification with heterosexuality and patriarchal values, the young protagonists are enclosed within a profoundly negative identification with homosexuality and estrangement from the nuclear family in Chinese society.

The third chapter looks at the ambiguity of homosocial affective relations portrayed in military Comrade fiction (军事同志小说 *junshi tongzhi xiaoshuo*). This sub-genre of stories feature *tongzhi* as men serving in China's national army, playing with the dual identification of *tongzhi* as both military comrade and gay comrade. A critical analysis of "Commitment" 《承诺》 (2008) presents an interesting perspective on the nexus of (homosexual) discipline and desire in the Chinese context, particularly with regard to the role of male same-sex friendships. By repositioning gay characters traditionally persecuted by Communist authorities within the figure of the military soldier who is most closely associated with that regime, these stories undermine the public policing of private desire. This chapter investigates "Commitment" through the interpretive lenses of Michel Foucault's vision of homoerotic friendship and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's notion of a homosocial and homosexual continuum in affective same-sex bonding. A focus on the shifting relationship between the gay military protagonists in the story gestures at a modern understanding of *tongzhi* that presents homoerotic tensions at the foundation of China's Communist system. This resignification of *tongzhi* introduces a homosocial-cum-homosexual community that simultaneously upholds yet controverts Communist ideology and heterosexual male soldier stereotypes, renegotiating the presumed links between masculinity and militarism, sexuality and State.

The conclusion reflects upon the literary (re)production of masculinity and femininity within male same-sex *tongzhi* relations in modern China, with special attention to how writers of *tongzhi* fiction utilize the internet as a new media platform to publish literature. The online circulation of Comrade Literature, located in the margins of Chinese heteronormativity and

mainstream literary genres, questions the ontology of kinship and new *tongzhi* subjectivities produced by China's rapid globalization. The decreased sense of distance between story and the real world through technological advances in cyberspace enhance the online Comrade text's ability to keep illusion and disillusion in tension, to further suspend the reader's doubt even while he/she understands the story's events to be unreal, and thereby become a model for the reader's participation in the world of fiction. The reader enters the text, but also views it as an omniscient observer and this gives rise to a mode of spectatorship that this thesis suggests is participatory and panoramic. The social media participant thus becomes both reader and creator in the story of his/her own literary and social *tongzhi* aspirations, (re)constructing a transnational and polysemic identity rooted in Chinese culture and society.

CHAPTER ONE

[Comrade Romance Narratives: Private Homoerotic Experiences in Public Discursive Space]

The opening sequence of *Tongzhi in Love* 《彼岸浮生》 (2008), a documentary by Ruby Yang, features “Frog” Cui as he reflects on how same-sex desire has moved him “head over heels in bliss” in a way he had never felt before. Nonetheless, he laments that although his relationship with his boyfriend is “swift and intense,” it “is not like the usual relationship” as their “feelings stay underground like the subway ... [and] can only speed through darkness.” The documentary’s aesthetic itself attests to an overarching theme of “speed[ing] through darkness”: it presents a 30-minute, emotionally charged amalgam of the lives of three gay men in China as they struggle to better understand the shadowy realm of contemporary Beijing’s *tongzhi* subculture. All three men narrate their discovery of and integration into Beijing’s *tongzhi* circle, relating their conflicted search for a “road in the middle” – an alternative to leading an undesirable life normalized through heterosexual marriage without being considered “disappointing Chinese [men]” who do not uphold key tenets of filial piety. The documented experiences of these men raise several issues concerning the tension between secrecy and disclosure, especially the role that personal narratives of homosexuality play in relation to those terms. On this point, perhaps what is most intriguing about the film is that all three men allow their faces to be captured on camera, even as they discuss the critical need to keep their *tongzhi* identity a deeply buried secret due to societal and family pressures.

In China’s *tongzhi* academic and activist communities, it is difficult not to address the shrouded reality of what Bai Xianrong has famously described as the “dark kingdom” inhabited by the titular characters in his novel, *Crystal Boys* 《孽子》 (1983). Representations of same-sex relations in China are inevitably organized around and plagued by an irresolvable conflict

between secrecy and disclosure, where the *tongzhi* experience incessantly fluctuates between the private and public spheres. In *Tongzhi in Love* (2008), “Frog” Cui’s interview exemplifies this tension: he shares stories about his private homosexual experiences – even going as far as to disclose his sexual encounters in gay bathhouses and group sex experiences – through a film reaching international audiences. However, the majority of *tongzhi* stories are not disseminated as documentary films, but as online fiction on internet forums. These fiction forge a liminal space where non-normative genders and sexualities are represented, renegotiating the boundaries of both homosexual and heterosexual identity across numerous settings. Like how the documentary provides a public platform for “Frog” Cui to share his personal narrative, online Comrade literature enables *tongzhi* to circulate gay-themed stories on easily accessible forums open to an extensive network of readers. This dynamic where private *tongzhi* texts interact with the broader public highlights the tension between secrecy and disclosure influencing modern China’s shifting ideologies about gender and sexuality.

One of the most popular sub-genres in online Comrade literature is Boy Love or “BL” stories. These stories feature gay love, but because they queer the conventional romance narrative structure, the storyline is familiar to a wide range of subjective perspectives. This chapter examines “Beijing Story” 《北京故事》 (1996) and “The Illusive Mind” 《迷思》 (2001), two Comrade romance stories that respectively appeared before and after the abolishment of the “hooligan” law decriminalizing homosexuality in China. The analysis focuses on how the stories portray fluid gender relations and identities of male homosexual characters to destabilize hegemonic norms in Chinese society. Both stories homologize same-sex and opposite-sex behaviors by inscribing homosexual male relations within the heterosexual paradigm. Concurrently, however, homosexual relations are accentuated as distinct from and perhaps more ideal than

dominant heterosexual practices. As such, “Beijing Story” and “The Illusive Mind” present same-sex romance narratives that blur boundaries between homo/heterosexual behavior and identities. The literary portrayal of performative masculinity and femininity reinscribed within male *tongzhi* relations simultaneously homologizes yet differentiates same-sex and opposite-sex relations, etching a space for non-normative genders and sexualities to emerge.

[“Beijing Story”: Gender Performance to Reenact the Traditional Tragic Love Story]

“Beijing Story” uses fictional representations of homosexuality to challenge the encroachment of public control into the private lives of Chinese (queer) citizens. On the one hand, the story situates homosexual identity within heterosexual practices to blur the distinction between homoerotic and heteroerotic desire. In this way, the narrative anecdotally assimilates same-sex to opposite-sex relations, elucidating that they are comparable and compatible. On the other hand, “Beijing Story” accentuates differences between same-sex and opposite-sex intimacy to display the genuine nature of homosexual love and legitimacy of a discrete *tongzhi* identity. Thus, the text represents male-male relations as animated by an incessant drifting between homosexual and heterosexual subjectivities.

As the first publicly accessible gay love story when it was published and circulated anonymously on the Chinese internet, “Beijing Story” (1996) spread rapidly through China’s online community to become one of the most widely read “underground” texts (Kong 2004).²³ The novella, now with Beijing Comrade (北京同志)²⁴ attributed as its author, pioneered illicit publishing on the internet, setting a precedent that has since led to the overwhelming popularity

²³ “Underground” here refers to how the text originated from the underground literary world of fiction published online.

²⁴ Most Comrade stories are published either anonymously or pseudonymously. Beijing Comrade, the author of “Beijing Story,” and the authors of all Comrade texts discussed in this thesis also follow this practice. Chinese netizens customarily use nicknames for all online interactions, but on Comrade websites pseudonyms also preserve anonymity of authors writing about provocative matters, protecting them from legal and social ramifications.

of gay novels in China's micro-blogging sphere (Juniatop 2010). In 2001, the openly gay Hong Kong director Stanley Kwan adapted "Beijing Story" and released it as the film *Lan Yu*. It was an immediate commercial success and won awards in film festivals throughout Hong Kong and Taiwan, attesting to the appeal of the story to both gay and straight audiences (Scott 2002).

Set in 1988, the novella tells the tragic love story of two men, Lan Yu and Han Dong. Lan Yu, a college student from rural China who attends university in Beijing, decides to prostitute himself when he is short of money. Han Dong, a wealthy businessman and the "son of a high-ranking government official," happened to be Lan Yu's first customer and sexual encounter (1).²⁵ The men become lovers after a one night stand, but while Lan Yu treats the relationship as a life-changing commitment from the start, Han Dong initially only considered it a casual diversion. The older man takes good care of the young student by showing affection in a material way, but does not allow himself to get emotionally involved and repeatedly warns Lan Yu "not to be too serious"(5).

When Lan Yu finds out Han Dong had started seeing Zhang Jian, another male college student, Lan Yu is crushed by Han Dong's infidelity and breaks off their relationship. However, several months later, Han Dong discovers that Lan Yu is involved in student demonstrations against the Communist leadership that culminated in the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. Worried about Lan Yu, Han Dong tracks him down and they resume their relationship. After a year of secretly living together, Han Dong begins to fear that his homosexual affair would become public knowledge and ruin his reputation. He breaks off his relationship with Lan Yu and announces his marriage to Lin

²⁵ All translations are the author's own. Additionally, as these stories are published online and not paginated, all citations refer to the relevant chapters rather than actual page numbers.

Jingping, a woman from his office, in a bid to become more "respectable" (6). After several dramatic twists and turns, in which Han Dong gets a divorce and also gets investigated for his company's illegal activities, both men finally acknowledge that they are gay and in love with each other. Just when it appears that they have overcome all obstacles in their relationship and can be together, Lan Yu dies suddenly in a car accident.

The author's language is straightforward and colloquial, and the story itself largely consists of long dialogues or sexual encounters. Although New Urban Fiction works that emerged in the mid-1990s increasingly featured explicit sexual content, the subject of sex was still rarely publicly discussed (Tan 1998; Ching 2010). As such, given that "Beijing Story" was circulated prior to the abolishment of the "hooligan" law and decriminalization of homosexuality in 1997 (Ma 2011), the homoerotic theme and gay sex scenes makes this early Comrade story unique. Furthermore, the turning point in the story when Han Dong realizes he is undeniably in love with Lan Yu occurs at a controversial scene that overtly describes the Chinese militia's violence towards university students during the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests.

Considering that references to the protests are still censored in China today, previous analyses of "Beijing Story" focused on the story's political undertones to scrutinize it as a homoerotic love story turned into a tableau of China's tumultuous recent history (Wang 2005). However, a reading of the Tiananmen scene requires a more nuanced view, where the incident symbolizes a breakdown of gender distinctions and thus defies Chinese society's heteronormative paradigm. In her essay on the incident itself, Rey Chow (1991) argued that the Tiananmen massacre was such an abysmal political crisis that "at the moment of shock Chinese people are degendered and become simply 'Chinese'" (Chow 1991, 82). This incident challenges the very categorization of gender, where the event represents the actual "degendering" of all Chinese men and women. Extending from this interpretation, the journalistic-style reference to

the Tiananmen Square events in “Beijing Story” highlights the imbrications of gender, sexuality, and State politics. To some extent, it is possible that Beijing Comrade’s intention was to use homoerotic themes as a literary trope to comment on the larger sociopolitical unrest in Chinese society. Ultimately, however, the story’s overarching sexual themes specifically challenge gender and sexual dichotomies and should not be ignored.

“Beijing Story” demonstrates the dilemmas that homosexual people in China face in having to hide their sexual preference and conform to the confines of a heterosexist society. Through the novella, the author portrays the emotions and desires of homosexual relations in a way that readers – both gay and straight – are able to empathize with. At the same time that the story homologizes homosexual to heterosexual relationships, it also consistently elucidates how they differ, and often appears to endorse male same-sex relations as a paragon of love – one that involves “no obligations [and] complete enjoyment” rather than the “money-driven” and “planned” objectives in heterosexual marital relations (1). Here, Butler’s theory on gender performance provides a compelling mode of analysis for representations of homosexuality in Comrade texts. Gender performance reveals that the binary definitions of both gender and sex are mere social constructions and gender identity is the result of reiterated acting (Butler 1988; 1990). Butler’s ideas elucidate how performative aspects of Comrade fiction distort gender identities in sexual and marital relations, controverting the expectations of a heteronormative paradigm.

Told in retrospect through the first-person voice and perspective of Han Dong, “Beijing Story” begins with him lamenting visions of Lan Yu in “the memories of [his] dream” as he wakes up next to his “new wife” (1). Immediately, the story situates the reverie of a transcendent homosexual love (symbolized by the spectral Lan Yu) against the reality of mundane

heterosexual life (embodied by the new wife). Beijing Comrade caricatures the trope of marriage to co-opt the conventional gender norms of heterosexuality. Instead of its original meaning signifying a naturalized relation, the normative convention of heterosexual marriage is deployed to symbolize the alternate homosexual relation that was denied. Heterosexual marriage, then, serves as an early point of departure for the text of “Beijing Story” to introduce and focus on homosexual relations vis-à-vis the homo/hetero binary. This demarcation between the homo- and heterosexual worlds – between the private and public spheres – is an evocative theme throughout the novella. This tension is evident when characters act in ways that are attributed to specific genders, contesting the prevalent homo/heterosexual dichotomy by illustrating shared aspects in both sexual domains. In this way, the text reinscribes homosexuality within the heterosexual paradigm, deconstructing gender conventions of opposite-sex relationships and creating a space for homosexuality to emerge.

The storyline of “Beijing Story” draws parallels in the depiction of Han Dong’s sexual encounters to the traditional Chinese sexual world where sexual acts of men were defined by social roles of penetrator/penetrated and superior/inferior, regardless of the sex or gender of his partner (Chou 2001). Han Dong’s sexual promiscuity with multiple male and female sex partners can thus be construed as an enactment of his elite position in the social and sexual hierarchy due to his superior wealth, age, and employment. Han Dong takes care of all of his partners in a material manner by giving them money and buying gifts, taking on the traditional role of an active male provider and penetrator to dominate social and sexual intercourse. At one point early in the story, Han Dong ponders how same-sex relations give him “a strong desire to conquer ... to dominate a man like eating a piece of cake” where “a woman is nothing” in comparison (5). This statement affirms Han Dong’s position as a dominant male and explains his homosexual

pursuits in social terms, seemingly conforming to the classical Chinese model of sexual hierarchy.

However, Han Dong's fluctuating attitude towards his own desire is complex and speaks more to the struggles that homosexuals experience in contemporary China rather than historical dynamics. The narration of his sexual encounters with both male and female partners juxtaposes same-sex and opposite-sex relationships to show that they share common experiences, suggesting that the homo/heterosexual dichotomy is merely performative. According to Butler's logic, the process of exhibiting gendered behavioral traits demonstrates the scripted nature of heterosexual desire and destabilizes normative conventions of gender and sexual identity (Butler 1990). This performative aspect of fixed gender roles in sexual relationships is evident when the story describes Lan Yu and Zhang Jian as men who display feminine features and Lin Jingping as a hyper-feminized woman. The recurring emphasis on distinct masculine and feminine gender traits in both same-sex and opposite-sex affairs calls appearances into question, exposing them as arbitrary constructions.

Perhaps what stands out most about "Beijing Story" is that as a gay love story, it underlines heteronormative aspects of their relationship. This analysis ties in with arguments put forth and developed by scholars such as Constance Penley about homoerotic slash fiction, where seemingly homosexual relationships show conventionally heterosexual characteristics (1992).²⁶ However, the plot of "Beijing Story" inverts this narrative development by demonstrating heteronormative traits within a homosexual romance. Thus, Han Dong and Lan Yu's homosexual affair actually follows a standard

²⁶ In Penley's article on "Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and Popular Culture," she contends that heterosexual female fans of homoerotic slash fiction reject the female body as a site of fantasy and utopian thinking and project their fantasies across the male body instead (1992). As such, even though the genre of slash fiction seemingly displays overt homoerotic themes, they are in reality only heterosexual fantasies in disguise.

romance novel formula: man meets woman, man loses woman, man and woman realize their true love for each other and end up together. The irony is manifest when readers recognize the gay male lovers each display distinct masculine and feminine traits. Certainly, when stripped to the core, all romantic relationships – in highs and lows, in security and jealousy, in passion and monotony – share the same recognizable emotional experiences as in Lan Yu and Han Dong’s relationship. By borrowing the heterosexual romance plot, the novella creates a fictional world where same-sex relations can be normative rather than aberrant, central rather than marginal.

Throughout the story, the narrator draws attention to Lan Yu as a man characterized by recognizable feminine traits, breaking down public stereotypes of gay people in China and problematizing his gender identity. Lan Yu is introduced as a college boy who was “not too tall and ordinary looking” and described as a “pure,” “extremely intelligent, and sensitive” virgin. This characterization defies the misconception of homosexuals as immoral criminal “hooligans” or pathological barbarians (2, 4; Chou 2001). As previously discussed, Chinese homosexuals under the Communist regime were pathologized as mentally ill, demonized as deviants, and considered threats to public order in China, particularly during the 1980s “Strike Hard” (严打 *yanda*) campaign (Chou 2001). Even today, same-sex attracted individuals do not receive legal recognition and are still relegated to hidden hiding places marked by shame and stigma. At the same time, however, the narrator’s depiction of Lan Yu as having conspicuously feminine traits with “a delicately pretty face,” “fair and smooth skin,” and “long lashed bright eyes” invokes the ubiquitous stereotype of an effeminate gay man (2, 4, 8). The contrary representation of Lan Yu where he both challenges yet reinforces distinct homosexual stereotypes speaks to Butler’s argument that all social and gendered life is inherently performative. This is further emphasized when Han Dong formulates a “theory about Lan Yu thinking about himself as a girl” because “it was true that Lan Yu loved [him] a little like a woman” (15). In this manner, Lan Yu’s gender

becomes malleable and unidentifiable: he is biologically male but literally embodies femininity and fulfills key female stereotypes.

Similarly, Han Dong's other same-sex affair depicts gender performance when the male drummer Zhang Jian is described as "lik[ing] to put on some makeup" with "velvet-colored eye shadow" before engaging in sexual intercourse. Lovemaking scenes also describe Zhang Jian partaking a feminine role with his "soft caresses," "women-like moans," and fondness of "putting on burgundy-colored lipstick and then kissing [Han Dong] all over" (5). In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler outlines the role of drag and cross-gender behaviors as imitation of performance that opposes "heteronormativity" by denaturalizing relations between sex, gender, and desire. In Butler's view, drag and cross-gender scenes undermine the assumption of coherence and "originality" of heterosexuality, emphasizing that there is no "proper" naturalized gender or sexuality (Butler 1990, 33). As such, the representation of feminine attributes in Han Dong's male sexual partners reveals the fictive nature of gender coherence to show how gender and sexuality is fabricated. In this way, the story exposes the homo/heterosexual definition as socially constructed, suggesting that they are homologous and homosexuality should not be marginalized based on this distinction.

The characterization of Han Dong's first wife, Ling Jingping, also reinforces the theme of gender performativity. She is described as an ideal woman with hyperfeminine traits; a woman that Han Dong admits "no man can refuse" (16). Han Dong pays close attention to her physical embodiment of the female gender, and Ling Jingping's sexual appearance as a woman is singled out as the only aspect that offered a "kind of satisfaction Lan Yu could never give" (13). Her character is stereotypically feminine: she is described as a "beautiful woman" who is "so innocent and lovely," seducing Han Dong

with her “girlish coyness” and “natural grace” (13). As such, Ling Jingping represents a physical standard of female and feminine that contrasts the gender personality traits of Lan Yu and Zhang Jian. She epitomizes the naturalization of femininity within heterosexuality, but her hyperfeminized character also deconstructs and denaturalizes heterosexuality by reversing the gender roles of seducer and seduced. By seducing Han Dong with her femininity, she awakens him to his true homoerotic desires where he finally realizes that he “likes men because they are male” more than he “likes women because they are female” (5). The failure of his first marriage allowed Han Dong to “gain the evidence that [he] ... was undoubtedly a homosexual” and that “no woman [would be] suitable for him” (21). This dystopic heterosexual experience dismantles the heteronormative sexual ideal, illustrating that presumptions about distinct bodily differences in sexual relationships are mere surface stylizations through which gender is performatively constructed.

In the case of Lan Yu and Zhang Jian, woman and feminine might just as easily signify and embody a male body as easily as a female one. This blurred boundary between male and female challenges the conventions of gender and sexuality to claim that gender cannot be limited to just one particular sex: there is no clear distinction between what defines feminine or masculine. As such, the Comrade text contests the exclusive opposite-sex attraction of heterosexual romance enforced by the Chinese patriarchal system, creating a space for *tongzhi* sexual orientations to come to the fore.

Another major theme in “Beijing Story” addresses the extreme pressure Chinese gay people face in a society led by Confucian values of the nuclear family. In recent years, scholars analyzing Comrade Literature from Taiwan and Hong Kong have pointed out that the virtue of filial piety (孝 *xiao*) is a frequent theme in *tongzhi* stories (Jian 1997; Martin 1999). Filiality is central to the traditional Chinese patrilineal family model where children, once economically

independent, are obligated to support their parents emotionally and financially to repay them for bearing the cost of their childhood education and living expenses. Additionally, male children are expected to produce sons as heirs and transmit the paternal surname. This traditional family model continues to exert significant influence in contemporary China, burdening children with homosexual inclinations. As Gu Min-Lun (1995) summarizes, *xiao* is a contract where “any deviation from these expectations that break the rules of behavior specified ... is ‘unfilial’ and ‘the greatest offence,’” and unfortunately, “being homosexual” is one of the most “depraved” ways of breaking this contract (qtd. in Li 1998, 4). This analysis exposes the irresolvable conflict between filially driven desires and homosexual acts that applies across all *tongzhi* populations regardless of geographical location in Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Mainland China. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the dilemma over accepting homosexuality in relation to the importance of filial piety is a disquieting motif throughout “Beijing Story.” Considering that homosexual behavior was criminalized and pathologized at the time of the story’s online publication, this preoccupation is particularly potent. Nonetheless, “Beijing Story” attempts to affirm the legitimacy of same-sex attraction by depicting it as a paragon of “true love.”

Throughout “Beijing Story,” the divergence in homosexual versus heterosexual attraction is evident: descriptions of homoerotic scenes are characterized by “wild sex,” “intense passion,” “obsessive addiction,” “eternal love,” and “making love as if there were no tomorrow” (5, 7, 11, 16, 28); in contrast, Han Dong’s sexual experiences with his wife, Lin Jingping are detached at first but turn into “a disaster” towards the end of their marriage, where his “sexual desire [is] far from aroused” and he “had to rely on [his] imagination” with sexual fantasies of Lan Yu or masturbation to reach his climax (20). Passionate lovemaking scenes between gay men are juxtaposed with the business-like tone that pervades Han Dong’s attitude towards women. Moreover, Han Dong muses that

“the biggest difference between men and women is that women make love with you because you are talented, wealthy, or dependable. Sex for them is like a reward they give their men. Whereas men make love for love, acting out of their most essential need” (5). These comparisons portray homoerotic love favorably as one that is “pure” with “genuine emotions” and “not just based on sex” while suggesting that heterosexual relations are to be discarded as “calculative” and disillusioned (9). This contrast undermines the heteronormative sexual ideal, presenting homosexual relations as a legitimate alternative.

Han Dong’s narrative consistently reflects upon his frustration at not being able to reconcile his love for Lan Yu with his obligation as a “decent man” to marry and fulfill his “responsibility of passing on his genes” (15). Even though Han Dong confesses that he “[has] not yet fallen in love with a woman,” he forces himself to sleep with women to “prove that [he is] a normal man” (15). Han Dong cannot bear to face his family’s condemnation, believing that “they would have killed [him] if they had known [his] relationship with Lan Yu” (4). Instead, he persuades himself to conform to the heterosexual ideal by repeatedly asserting that he “is a normal man,” “not a homosexual,” and was merely “playing a game ... for a new kick” (15, 18). Conversely, Lan Yu abandons any attempt to appear heterosexual by acknowledging his homosexuality from the start. While Lan Yu sacrifices his social status and is slandered as a male prostitute, he nonetheless manages to achieve “independence and happiness” as a gay man (19).

Han Dong initially upbraids Lan Yu repeatedly for not conforming to heterosexual expectations. Although he urges Lan Yu to “practice playing with girls” so that he could “look for a wife later on,” Han Dong is preoccupied with his “affair with Lan Yu [being] absurd and too abnormal,” expressing anguish over his inability to stop “loving another man” (9). Faced with these ambivalent emotions, he justifies his decision to get married and end his relationship with Lan Yu because it would be “good for both of [them]” (9). It is evident that even when Han

Dong is clear about his feelings for Lan Yu, he is neither capable of expressing such emotions publicly nor of envisioning such a relationship without placing Lan Yu in the role of a woman. Han Dong and Lan Yu are aware of the potential danger of their relationship, where “even though [their] love was overflowing, [they] could still not reveal it in public” (15). Furthermore, at several points in the story Han Dong laments that Lan Yu is not – and cannot fulfill the role of – “a girl,” implying that if he had only been biologically female, their relationship could work (3, 10, 13). By figuratively placing Lan Yu into a feminine role, Beijing Comrade reinscribes the gay lovers into the conventional heterosexual male-female romance plot, destabilizing conventional notions of a masculine/feminine binary.

When it is clear that Lan Yu is willing to sacrifice his reputation and identify as a homosexual, he begins to serve as a role model for Han Dong. Although Han Dong eventually acknowledges his own gay inclinations, he “does not have the kind of courage like Lan Yu had to face [his] homosexual identity” (32). After Lan Yu’s sudden death, Han Dong inevitably falls back onto the path of least resistance by getting remarried. Lan Yu’s tragic corporeal death and ghosted presence serves as a textual martyr and lingering symbol for the stigma that Chinese gays have to contend with if they were to publicly acknowledge their homosexuality. As such, the novella’s plot demonstrates how gay individuals cannot escape the control of the heteronormative paradigm, and are only able to embrace their homosexuality either in dreams or upon death.

It is significant that Han Dong’s narrative in “Beijing Story” begins and ends with an apparition of Lan Yu. In Chinese fiction, ghosts have traditionally been portrayed as lustful and seductive creatures (Sieber 2001). They exist in a liminal state as beings that have the capacity to evoke such strong passion that people would disregard social taboos

of engaging in “immoral” sexual acts. Ghosts are thus suspended between being harbingers of death or destruction and agents of social transformation (Zeitlin 1997). In this sense, Lan Yu’s spectral being symbolizes both the destructive and liberating consequences of embracing homoerotic desire. His ghost problematizes the demise of “facing a homosexual identity” at a time where same-sex relations were still criminalized and pathologized (32). However, it also illuminates how Lan Yu was able to liberate himself from the mental frustrations that plague gay people when they force themselves to conform to heterosexual ideals.

The novella ends with a luminous and almost holy vision of Lan Yu smiling and bathed in “chrysanthemum-orange sunlight” as he walks towards Han Dong (32). This imagery of Lan Yu as a sanctified presence coupled with Han Dong’s prayers to God to forgive him for “falling in love with someone he shouldn’t” and having “an affair ... considered preposterous, shameless, and decadent on Earth” reveals feelings of optimism mixed with a hollow sense of inevitable loss (32). Moreover, the fact that Han Dong becomes religious by converting to Christianity and the story’s plain indication that “God [has] accepted [him], a homosexual, into His flock” to absolve him of sin criticizes the pervasive political and religious discourse that punishes homosexuals both in life and death (32). These descriptions affirm the legitimacy of same-sex relations as “pure, innocent, and eternal,” contesting the public misconception of homosexuality perpetuated by hegemonic patriarchal values and political discrimination (32). By presenting a revelation that unfolds through a dream, Beijing Comrade’s novella shows that dreams have both a hermeneutic and therapeutic function. When Han Dong is awakened both concretely and figuratively, his spiritual acknowledgment of homosexual desire corresponds to a process of self-knowledge that is liberating and redemptive, embodied by the enlightened dreamy figure of Lan Yu.

[“The Illusive Mind”: Abstracting Gender Identities and Elusive Sexuality]

“The Illusive Mind” (2003) was a short story published online anonymously seven years after “Beijing Story” first appeared. Two cornerstone events altering the landscape for homosexuality in China include: (1) the lifting of the “hooligan” law used to criminalize homosexual behavior in 1997, and (2) the deletion of homosexuality from the Chinese official list of mental illnesses in 2001 (Cao 2000; Ma 2011). However, despite these landmark legal achievements for the *tongzhi* community, the Chinese government perpetuated an official silence on and informal repression of homosexual behavior (Liu 2005; Nieland *et al.* 2007). Until now, the social and political status of homosexuals in China is ambiguous and they still face legal discrimination (Yao 2010; Mountford 2010). The Chinese government also enforced increasingly strict laws on censorship to regulate the Internet, suppressing the ability of the *tongzhi* community and culture to develop online.

By 2002, the Chinese State Order Council had promulgated content restrictions for Internet content providers and the first stage of the Golden Shield project, an extensive censorship system also dubbed “The Great Firewall,” was initiated (Abbott 2004; Zheng 2009). Furthermore, “Self-discipline Regulations” to “suppress the spread of obscene (淫秽 *yinhui*) ... [and] pornographic (色情 *seqing*) information” on websites had recently gone into effect (China Online 2003, 1). Any descriptions of sexuality, in general, and of homosexuality, in particular, were considered “content with an aim to provoke people's sexual desire but [with] no artistic or scientific value ... caus[ing] the degeneration and perversion of common people” (2). Under this law, numerous *tongzhi* websites were shut down and Comrade stories with any sexual content were heavily censored or deleted without warning (Davis 2005). After an initial appreciation of publishing literature and voicing opinions online, the Chinese government’s strict internet censorship and erasure of any unfavorable content inflamed public criticism (Zheng 2008). As

such, the Comrade stories that appeared during this period, including “The Illusive Mind,” address issues concerning freedom of expression in relation to modern China’s socialist market economy.

Concurrently, great strides were made in the Chinese literary realm, partly due to influences from Western discursive practices but also as a result of localized literary developments in the 1980s. With the end of the Cultural Revolution, literary ideals that had long been oppressed became active (Zhang and Ming 2007).²⁷ Chinese writers began to embrace contemporary discursive practices such as post-modernism, reflexivity, and self-consciousness in writing. As Comrade authors gained exposure to different literary works and the Chinese online *tongzhi* culture, both new but rapidly changing phenomena, the stories produced mirror the growing self-awareness among Chinese gays (Simon 2001). The earliest stories (with “Beijing Story” as the foundational novella) served as a refuge from reality, whereas later works reflect less need for these types of texts (Cristini 2005). Increasingly, authors of Comrade stories could not just rely on explicit homosexual content to engage and impress their readership, and developed their literary writing skills. This is evident in the greater thematic diversity distinguished by inventive plots and poetic language of stories published at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Even though almost two decades have passed since “Beijing Story” (1996) was first circulated, few Comrade texts from the Mainland have garnered the same level of attention and

²⁷ Scholars have highlighted that, immediately following the end of the Cultural Revolution, political objectives came first and artistic aims second, and works prioritized commenting on or documenting past history to “make up” for the ten-year absence of literary production (Wang and Lin 2011). In contrast, when China experienced rapid development that transformed the nation’s social, political, and economic landscape, an exclusive concentration articulating political objectives was abandoned and “the understanding of ‘art’ and ‘literature’ became the new criterion of concealment and revelation” (Wang and Lin 2011, 237). With the intensification of market reforms, Chinese literature and culture turned increasingly commercial and escapist, and writers increasingly recognized the role of literature in exposing social problems and activating future social change (Woesler 2008). In the age of globalization, new categories of writing that highlight the impact of modernization and consumerism in China’s sociopolitical environment began to develop on the Chinese literary front. In general, new Chinese writings across all genres exhibit an increase in conscious attention to aesthetic detail and artistic style (Woesler 2008). Texts that were produced under the genre of Comrade Literature also bear the mark of this progression.

enthusiasm. In comparison, “The Illusive Mind” (2003) is obscure and its influence is confined to the online *tongzhi* community. The etymology of the title in the Chinese, 《迷思》 (*misi*), originates from the Greek word *mythos* and directly translates into the English as “myth.” However, this translation does not capture the connotation in Chinese where the phrase “迷思的爱情” (*misi de aiqing*) describes young star-crossed lovers whose romance hedges on the realm between reality and imagination. The title itself already indicates that the Comrade story reappropriates the heterosexual love story for a homosexual relationship. “The Illusive Mind” (2003) normalizes homoerotic desires, assimilating it into an ostensibly heterosexual paradigm. Through dreamlike narratives, the story blurs the boundary of binary categories prescribed by the heteronormative tradition. As such, a preoccupation with the distinction between private/public, imagination/reality, and secrecy/disclosure as they relate to homo/heteroerotic desires haunts the text.

In contrast to the straightforward language in “Beijing Story,” “The Illusive Mind” uses a non-linear writing style with noticeably heightened attention to aesthetics. “The Illusive Mind” concerns two boys who have known each other since secondary school and are now living in the same city where they attend different – “A” and “B” – universities (1). Early on in the story, we learn of the protagonist’s fondness of the sea and his emotional attachment to Z, even though for the first few chapters there is no indication that their relationship would be anything more than friendship. One night, they meet for dinner and the narrator spends the night with Z after they stay up late recollecting shared memories. In the early morning, Z suddenly confesses that he is in love with the narrator, but the narrator is confused and asks for some time to think about his response (6). The narrator decides to go to the seaside to reflect on how to deal with his situation, and runs into X as she is struggling with her own emotions after a fight with

her boyfriend (7). The rest of the story essentially articulates the narrator's thought process as he reflects on his feelings: on how to understand and express his feelings to Z, or whether he should pursue a relationship with X, who is also attracted to him.

After many long episodes of self-conscious reflections, the narrator makes up his mind to tell Z that he loves him. When they meet, Z gives him a beautiful golden pen and the narrator uses it to write the words "I love you." However, Z's attitude changes abruptly and immediately advises the narrator to pursue a relationship with X (17). Later on that day, Z unexpectedly refers to the night that they slept together in his room to tell the narrator that he probably had a nightmare, because he was tossing and turning. The narrator is struck with the revelation that Z's love confession was only a dream, and feels dejected. At a loss for what to do, he begins to write a love letter that he wants to send to both X and Z, but realizes that it would make things more complicated and instead goes to the sea. Standing on a cliff, he thinks about throwing the pen that Z gave him into the sea; however, he ends up holding onto it. The story concludes at this wavering moment, and we do not learn anything further about what becomes of the narrator, Z, or X.

What immediately stands out to the reader is the anonymity sustained throughout the text: the first-person narrator is unnamed, and the entire story comprises of him narrating ambivalent emotions for X, a beautiful girl in his university, and Z, his male best friend. This type of writing carries what Li Yinhe (2008) has defined as the "clear characteristics of youth living in the age of globalization" influenced by the internet's mass culture and market (5). Chinese literary critic Zhang Yiwu (2007) termed this writing style as one of "rejuvenatism" where "the plot lines are extremely obscure, and very often there is only the extemporaneous penning of some blurry fragments of daily life or the mere rise and fall of emotion" (15). Additionally, the content of

these stories predominantly display “a mixture of rebellion and conformity” to place “an emphasis on self” in making a choice (Zhang 2007, 16).

In “The Illusive Mind,” the protagonist’s perspective unfolds through dreamlike narratives centered on the disjointed clustering and flow of emotions. This surrealistic writing style blurs the distinction between the public and private worlds, the real and the imaginary, fact and fiction. The scope of experience in the text is restricted to the private life and trivial matters of the narrator, including the capricious feelings of adolescent youth and melancholic restlessness. However, artistic portrayals of seascapes, which the narrator is excessively fond of, and the mundane obligations of university student life are juxtaposed against heavyhearted emotions. Furthermore, the use of anonymous, vague characters denoted by a single, capitalized Romanized letter (X or Z) deploys a storytelling technique that instructs readers to concentrate on the personal journey of an implicated character – the unnamed narrator.

Unlike “Beijing Story” where characters are presented with concrete identities, the characters in “The Illusive Mind” are open to interpretation, fuelling readers’ imagination to visualize themselves in the story’s diegesis. In this way, the story reads like a journal entry, where the author-narrator projects his own desires and thoughts into the minds of readers, regardless of their hetero- or homosexual orientations. “The Illusive Mind” merges the narrator’s fictive world with the reader’s real-life world where individual experiences are all self-narrated. Readers partake in the same experiences that the author-narrator has limned, and the narrative’s anonymous characters resonate in a way they would not if they were more clearly defined.

Physical aspects of gender performance are hinted at in the narrative: Z is described in stereotypically feminine forms as being “fair-skinned” with “soft lips,” “long-lashed eyes,” and

“soft, sexy arms” (2, 7, 16, 18); in turn, X is characterized with extremely feminine traits as an “ideal beautiful woman” who exudes “quiet elegance” with “long, beautiful hair” and “enchanted eyes” (3). Such representations critique the social construction of fixed gender roles in sexual relations, underscoring the irony that feminine traits can be personified by both male and female bodies and are not assigned on any biological basis.

The fact that characters are merely denoted by a solitary, disconnected letter accentuates how, too often, individuals hide behind fixed names and let them shape who we are instead of asserting distinct identities. The narrator in “The Illusive Mind” is placed indeterminately between homo/hetero identities and desirer/desired subject positions. In his mind, he envisions a world where he pursues a fulfilling homosexual relationship with Z; in his bodily experience, however, the narrator’s homoerotic desire for Z is translated into heterosexual attraction to X, the only option available to him. Therefore, the narrator is rendered an interstitial being suspended between imagination and reality, here and there, where he is and where he wants to be.

The dream narratives that recur throughout the story blur reality and imagination to reveal public heterosexual attraction and private homosexual desires simultaneously. Thus, the human *mind* rather than the body is relegated as the primary site of sexual drama and contention. This type of storytelling does not supply us with the kind of “body” (i.e.: the material homoerotic subject) that embodies a corporal perversion, repudiating the very figures that represent homosexualized abjection. The lack of bodily confines is at once deconstructive and reconstructive, taking the notion of gender performativity to a new cognitive level by abstracting all materiality. In Butler’s terms, the body is the site and symbol of sexual prohibition, the “materiality ... at which a certain drama of sexual difference plays itself out” (1993, 49). By focusing on the mind instead, “The Illusive Mind” dislocates the materiality of the body to deprive the feminine/masculine and homo/heterosexual of a symbolic shape altogether.

Accordingly, the author-narrator's formless narrative undermines the "bounding [and] forming of sexed bodies ... [as] a set of enforced criteria of intelligibility" to "refigure, redistribute, and resignify the constituents of that symbolic and, in this sense, constitute a subversive rearticulation of that symbolic" (Butler 1993, 55; 109). This compels readers to observe human behaviors at its most fundamental level, where individuals share many characteristics regardless of their sex, gender, or sexuality. Throughout the story, the narrator creates vagueness between the sexed positions of X and Z – between male/female subjects and homo/hetero relationships – to underscore that there is often no distinction between them. He constantly compares his feelings for X and Z, and towards the end of the story, comes to the realization that "when [he] closes his eyes to think about it, to imagine each of their eyes, one is clear and transparent; the other is shrouded and distant. Slowly, however, [he] cannot tell which pair belongs to X, which pair belongs to Z. They have become one and the same" (20). This fluidity effectively homologizes same-sex and opposite-sex relations, providing insight that homosexual and heterosexual desire can overlap and merge.

Throughout the story, homosexuality is presented with a relatively subconscious ease. Not at one point do we get the impression that gay love is innately abnormal and should be condemned, or something to be especially secretive about. The narrator's deliberations about identifying and accepting his feelings for Z do not hinge on their homosexual nature but rather on whether he is truly in love. Although the narrator does initially ponder that he "can't accept Z's love" because he "thinks [he] is normal," apprehension about the psychology of same-sex love does not harangue him the way it affected Han Dong in "Beijing Story" (9). Rather, the narrator's thoughts in "The Illusive Mind" fixate on his own general capacity to love or be loved and his doubts about the sincerity of Z's love. For example, in one of the narrator's reflections on his feelings for Z, he articulates that "to be honest, [he] wanted to maintain relations with Z like

before. [He] would like to hope they could be intimate, but do[es] not want to risk a breakup” (11). He fears that “it was likely that Z confessed only on impulse” and “will find a girl to take him away from these feelings of [him] in the near future” (11). These are all problems that apply indiscriminately to any relationship; they illustrate that same-sex and opposite-sex love should not be differentiated. Furthermore, the reason the narrator was unable to pursue a homosexual relationship with Z, even after he realizes that he is truly in love, was not due to external societal pressures. Rather, the narrator’s love was unrequited by Z – a predicament that all individuals who yearn intimate connection with others have experienced. As such, this final development homologizes same-sex and opposite-sex relationships on the basis that they share the same emotional difficulties.

Ironically, it is the narrator’s heterosexual relations with X that is presented as a misdemeanor because X has a boyfriend, who is actually the narrator’s roommate. Their relationship is set up as clandestine from the start when the narrator first talks to X after walking in on her hiding in a classroom to avoid her boyfriend and promises to “help [her] keep it a secret” (3). These developments invert public misperceptions that opposite-sex relations are sanctioned and normative in Chinese society, whereas same-sex practices are illicit and condemned. Moreover, the story’s main drama centers around how to express your affection for someone without knowing what his reaction will be, in the case where the narrator persistently tries to “find a way to tell Z how [he] truly feels” (18). Another tricky dilemma concerns how to ascertain another’s interest in a relationship, represented by the narrator’s thoughts on how “[he] should find out if X has feelings for [him]” (19). The distinction between homoerotic and heteroerotic desire is deemphasized, once again insinuating that binary gender categories are mere tautological social constructs.

Nonetheless, “The Illusive Mind” does not attempt to create a fantasy world where same-sex love can exist in isolation. Throughout the story, there is a constant acknowledgement of the sociopolitical pressures that repress the freedoms people have in expressing their sexual identity. The theme of silence recurs throughout the story, and has ominous references to government policies and social pressures suppressing the voices of *tongzhi* in China. At the beginning of the story, the narrator states:

Just like how perfection does not exist in human life, a perfect story does not exist. I have always firmly believed in this point. So in my life, I have not had many luxuries, and have been called someone who has “no ambition in the heart.” I might not be a perfect man, but I just want to live my life simply. Over the years, I have been repeatedly misunderstood and ostracized. Countless people have come hastily towards me, like the loads of cars crossing bridges, bringing their noises across my back; I can only silently bear their burdens, until the day the bridge collapses (1).

This opening sets the narrator’s plaintive tone and prefaces the story by indicating that it is flawed: an inconsistent reflection of a shifting reality. The problem of silence and silenced desires – the “ambition of the heart” – is also immediately brought to bear, and readers are made aware that the love story about to unfold will not likely have a happy ending. Silence is used both thematically within the narrative and as a literary device to accentuate how sexual victimization has been suppressed in public discourse. With the particular regime of social control in China, scholars have noted that silence can serve the purpose of resistance for various subordinated groups (Shaw 1996, 195).²⁸

In contemporary China, the price of assimilation into and acceptance within the heteronormative society for homosexuals has often been enforced silence. However, even breaking such silence has effected few changes in the sociopolitical landscape for *tongzhi* on the Mainland. Speech is neither guaranteed nor necessarily liberating, and the marginalized homosexual community has been forced to develop alternative strategies of resistance. Silence

²⁸ It is also useful to note that Chinese religious beliefs stemming from Buddhism and Taoism have traditionally placed great value on the sacredness of silence as a higher form of communication (Kenney 2011).

itself becomes a strategy of such resistance, operating both as a form of discourse and a will to “unsay,” and is not to be mistaken as passive submission to hegemonic control (Shaw 1996, 195). As a form of protest, silence is non-provocative; it does not involve open confrontation, but it can transmit resistance in a clear and persistent way (Jungkunz 2008).

In *tongzhi* literature, silence becomes an emblematic trope around which multiple themes and questions revolve – relationships among desires, gender, sexuality, and society; between queer and traditional heteronormative positioning; on official and unofficial histories. Silence is popularly featured as a method of protest, questioning the realities of experience, history, and memory through language and an absence of language. Apropos to silence, “The Illusive Mind” is told from the subjective perspective of a reticent twenty-one year old college student. Throughout the story, he is largely silent, commenting that he “hardly says seven sentences a week” and enjoys going to the sea because when he “face[s] the sea there is no need to speak” (2, 8). Furthermore, he narrates a recurring dream he has in which he sees himself “transformed into a very large bird,” a “mute bird that cannot make any noise,” as it “struggles flying over an endless rainforest” with a wounded wing (3). As the bird, he describes being surrounded by an “ominous blanket of darkness” where he “tries to call for help from its kind, but no matter how hard [he] tries [his] throat feels like it is stuffed with cotton balls and cannot make any sound” (3).

This emphasis on silence and being silenced invokes Foucault’s ideas about the relationship between sexual repression and discourse. In his work, Foucault interprets the act of confession as part of a will to attain knowledge, a form of seeking “truth” whereby speaking is both demanded by and a demand for power (1976, 26). He suggests that silence is not to be understood in opposition to speech but rather as a portion of generative discourse itself. As he puts it, “there is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that

underlie and permeate discourses” (Foucault 1976, 27). Therefore, silence is associated with the unspoken and unspeakable concepts of sexuality, in general, and homosexuality, in particular. Presented as a central theme in “The Illusive Mind,” silence is symptomatic of how the homosexual subject is silenced by the very language he speaks, comparable to what Butler calls a “performative contradiction” (1993, 20). Although silenced, the *tongzhi* narrative is not voiceless for, in the Foucaultian view, what is prohibited inevitably returns in new and resignifying forms, reshaping the manifest content of the text.

In Comrade texts, silence operates both literally and metaphorically. It signifies the sexual silence that readers experience in real life, provoking them to rethink sexuality and homoerotic desire within Chinese culture. In addition, silence is also symbolic of power and great strength, a common trope in liberation and social-justice movements linked with acts of “speaking out,” “finding a voice,” and “breaking silence.” This theme is evident when Z advises the narrator on relationships, saying that there should be “no ‘No Entrance’ sign in front of the door to love” and that “even if there is always a guard obstructing your entry, it does not mean that you cannot still score a goal” to obtain love (2, 16). The notion of a guarded silence in “The Illusive Mind” thus places liberating aspirations within the text, appealing to an unspoken realm of homoerotic desires.

With numerous literary devices signifying sexual desire and the nature of same-sex relations, it is striking that there is not one single description of sexual intimacy or even physical closeness throughout the text. It is likely that on a practical level, “The Illusive Mind” is devoid of any explicit sexual scenes to circumvent censorship. However, on a deeper level, Chinese readers will recognize that the story is saturated with sexual overtones and an overflow of sensual imagery. This is evident in the rich vocabulary used to describe the subtle nuances in colors, shapes, sounds, and moods of seascapes.

Furthermore, the frequent references to water in the form of rain, the sea, fountains, snow, and even sweat soaks the narrative in a constant wetness arousing erotic emotions.

In traditional Chinese texts, water has been used discreetly to refer to erotic passion, especially in poetry and paintings (Huang 2001, 28). Imbued with sexual meaning, this metaphor originates from a well-known saying by a Ming dynasty Chinese philosopher when he compares the relation between feelings and desire with water. He describes the mind to be like water: its original natural state is comparable to tranquil water, sex (性 *xing*) is the principle of water, feelings (情 *qing*) cause the water to flow, and desire (欲 *yu*) is water animated by waves that can begin to flood (滥 *lan*) (Stone 2003, 49). Water is also a major element of *Yin* (阴) in the Chinese cultural conception of a *Yin-Yang* world balance, where flowing water can be a symbol of purification and the regeneration of life or the distortion and overwhelming power of sexual passion (Stone 2003).²⁹ In particular, vigorously moving water (e.g.: incessant rain and breaking waves) alludes to sexual climax and the full arousal of carnal passion, but also emphasizes the destructive power of water (and erotic emotion) to envelope and destroy.

Literal or figurative, descriptions of water and weather conditions in modern Chinese literature have also been appropriated as metaphors of entrapment and despair, calling attention to problems embedded in Chinese modernity. Water is deployed to create a paradoxical moral and political situation in which water no longer purifies, but instead suffocates, expressing the transitional tensions of Chinese modernity (Liao 2007). Applied to sexuality in Comrade Literature, then, water is a complex symbol that alludes to the beauty of sexual desire, but also the apprehension associated with embracing a (homo)sexual identity.

The narrator in “The Illusive Mind” frequently goes to the beach, alone, to sit silently and reflect on the internal struggle he experiences over his feelings and desires for Z. Sometimes, he

²⁹ In colloquial speech, 高潮 (*gaochao*), a term that literally refers to “high tide,” also connotes sexual orgasm.

goes together with X to the seaside, but when he gazes at the sea, his thoughts revert to his feelings for Z. As such, the story is punctuated with detailed portrayals of seascapes:

You could only vaguely see the contours of the mountain chain on the other side of the misty bay. It was early Autumn, and the surface of the sea was serene. Brilliant sunlight and a few cotton white clouds floating in the azure sky.

Even the smallest waves smashed to pieces when they crashed onto the shore. The moment just before they shatter, their bellies, yellow like orioles, would swell as if they had taken on the burden and all the unhappiness of the seaweeds.

The swelling water reflects glinting spots of light on its endless ripples. The arch of the horizon stretched out endlessly, as if it were a blue hoop, firmly holding the sea together. In a sudden moment, a white wave would suddenly rise like a gigantic wing, but in the next, it would disappear again with a spontaneous and refined dance, a hint of vitality; but also of life and death.

With the rising tide, the waves surge higher and higher. The beach would silently give in to this assault and slowly shrivel. A shaft of light would slowly extend over the water surface, from west to east, like a folding fan opening up. The face of the fan is rippled, and at the base of the fan the darkness of the mountains would blend in the dark green plane. The waves roll incessantly, never surpassing the boundaries of the shores, and always obedient to the distant moon (1).

The beautiful imagery of water and waves throughout the story can be read in terms of the sexual desire that preoccupies his mind when he thinks about Z. In fact, almost all encounters the narrator has with either X or Z are wet: the narrator's memories of Z mention falling snow (2); the narrator meets X alone when it is raining and they walk together in the rain (8); the narrator takes walks with both X and Z on the beach (14; 16). This wetness of the entire text reinforces themes of gender fluidity set forth by the ambiguous narrative.

Interestingly, the only character that is given a name in the whole story is X's boyfriend, who is referred to as 雨 (yu) literally meaning "rain," but also plays a homophone pun on 欲 (yu), meaning "desire." The author plays clever puns on same-sex and opposite-sex desire on the story's protagonist contemplates his feelings for X and Z. He deliberates that X gives him "an opportunity to try a normal relationship" and he should "try to court this girl as his girlfriend" with disregard to what will happen to "Yu" (literally indicating X's boyfriend who is in love with her, but implicitly talking about his

true sexual desires for Z) (9). The narrator continues to say that he “just hopes that ‘Yu’ will not rise up to suffocate him” if he were to try dating X (9). Moreover, he laments that “if only ‘Yu’ would retreat” he could confidently tell Z that “the person [he] loves is X, a woman, and not him” instead of having to tell Z that he is “unable to accept his love” (9). With these puns, the narrator implies that his encounters with both X and Z are saturated with sexual intimacy, but his true passion lies within homoerotic desire for Z. The imagery of a purifying and inspiring sea of desire accompanying the narrator’s feelings for Z is starkly contrasted with the dreary, incessant rainfall associated with X. This contrast illuminates that homoerotic passion should not be marginalized, as it has the potential to be more intense and genuine than heterosexual desires.

It is also significant that the narrator’s homoerotic encounters with Z take place in the dark. Like water, darkness is also closely associated with *Yin* and sexuality in Chinese culture. The night that the narrator stays overnight in Z’s room and mistakenly believes that Z confesses his love, they had spent the evening having dinner and recounting past memories in darkness as the electricity had been cut. The narrator also describes how he and Z “like to swim together,” but “always only in the dark,” a sexual allusion that poignantly combines both water and darkness (5). Also, the story’s climax occurs when the narrator describes his experience wandering with Z into the “absolute darkness” of a deserted bunker (16). At this point, the narrator has decided to “pour out his love” to Z, but in the darkness of the bunker the words escape him and he is only able “to sit quietly next to Z, in the dark” (16). Darkness in this context signifies a venture into an unknown space of homoerotic desire: a journey to discover who they are and how they might grow up to overcome the terrifying plight of being alone. These scenes of darkness also reinforce central themes of silence, isolation, and desire, highlighting the internal struggles *tongzhi* face in grappling with identification/anonymity and visibility/concealment amidst stigma and suppression. In this way, allusions to sexuality affirms

that powerful homosexual emotions do exist, inherently contesting the heteronormative standard that represses them.

The story ends with another vivid portrait of the narrator at the sea. Acknowledging that his love for Z is unrequited with the sudden realization that Z's confession was merely a dream, the narrator is now aware of his subconscious desires. At this point, "The Illusive Mind" illustrates the awakening of hidden desires together with the revelation of desire's vacuity. When the protagonist discovers that his own mind has deluded him, he has to make a decision about how to act upon his latent affection. He recognizes that there is no way to deny his feelings any longer, and stands on the edge of a cliff thinking about throwing the golden pen that Z gave him into the sea below him. In this instance, the pen becomes a metaphor of homosexual love and functions as the necessary psychological and rhetorical means for objectifying – and ultimately embracing – that love which could otherwise not be acknowledged. The love that has no name, the love that is silenced and rendered non-existent in Chinese society, is materially represented by the "brilliantly golden" pen – the "golden cocoon" of their same-sex desires (20).

By attempting to throw the pen into the waves, the narrator tries to liberate himself from what he now perceives to be a "hopeless" love, but by throwing it into the depths of a figurative sea of desire, the text sustains the eroticism it seemingly seeks to foreclose. Readers are left questioning whether the act of throwing the pen would truly result in the drowning of homosexual love, or rather merely allude to a rejuvenating homoerotic release. Nonetheless, the narrator does not have the courage to throw the pen away, and the story ends with the comment that he "firmly grasps that golden pen" in the palm of his hand (20). The golden pen has a luminous presence, and by holding on to it,

readers are left with the impression that the narrator does not give up hope that he will be able to embrace homosexual love one day.

With this inconclusive ending, the story comes full circle, implying that the narrator's courage to hold on to the pen has resulted in the writing of "The Illusive Mind" as a diary of his experience. Although the narrator does not have the opportunity to experience love in the end, it does not seem to affect him to the extent that he loses all hope of finding future love or happiness. Compared to "Beijing Story," "The Illusive Mind" projects a more balanced point of view that is instructive to readers as they navigate their own internal struggles. As such, "The Illusive Mind" prompts readers to relive the story's events and emotions from personal experiences, providing them with insight gained from the process of seeing oneself depicted in fiction. Readers not only empathize with the literary plot and characters in a fictive world, but actually play an active role in identifying the characters in the "plot" of their real world. Ultimately, "The Illusive Mind" invites readers to join the narrator on an exploration of an interior space where the imagination reigns. Readers participate in constructing a world that situates homosexual behaviors as equally legitimate, if not even more desirable, than heterosexual practices.

[Comrade Literature and the Public Performance of Private Homoerotic Stories]

During the mid-1990s when "Beijing Story" first circulated in the Chinese web-based literary world, new institutionalized taxonomic discourses – medical, legal, sociological, psychological – centering on the homo/heterosexual definition had been proliferating and crystallizing with exceptional rapidity for more than a decade (Li 2008; Wang 2005). Framed as personal narratives, "Beijing Story" and "The Illusive Mind" provide readers a unique lens to view their own relationships and explore gender identity from a radically different perspective. Both stories suggest something powerfully revisionary: that same-sex intimacy, because it is the

first heartfelt bond between two men, can serve as a template for an ideal love. “Beijing Story” and “The Illusive Mind” problematize the notion that there is no romance plot other than a heterosexual plot. Both texts offer structures that parody and destabilize the supposedly compulsory exchange between two oppositional positionalities, the “masculine” and “feminine,” in traditional conventions of romantic relationships. They characterize gays as ordinary individuals in Chinese society to dismantle discriminatory stereotypes, normalizing homosexual relationships by illustrating gender performance.

Writing, story-telling, and personal narratives through Comrade texts challenge traditional conventions about gender, sexuality, and identity, disputing universal claims to truth by replacing them with a diversity of perspectives and standpoints. “Beijing Story,” “The Illusive Mind,” and numerous other Comrade stories all tell tales of self-discovery as homosexual protagonists search for intimacy. Through fiction, Comrade texts show readers that, even in the real world, what we refer to as necessary components of sex or gender identity – the categories of male/female or masculine/feminine and the distinction between homo- and heterosexual behavior – are superficial performances and do not have a biological basis. All the same, the stories gesture at how homosexual and heterosexual behaviors intersect and coexist.

CHAPTER TWO

[Queer Reflections and Inflections in Comrade Bildungsroman]

After the “hooliganism” crime (流氓罪 *liumangzui*) that outlawed sodomy was abolished from China’s Penal Code in 1997, the unregistered Chinese Newsletter on Love and Knowledge (爱知简报 *Aizhi Jianbao*)³⁰ published an anonymous letter. The author writes about a childhood friend who was intelligent, handsome, good natured, and lively, presenting an anecdote to portray the personal tragedies that ensue from social and political prejudice against homosexuality. The author and his friend grew up together in the same neighborhood, and after graduating from college this friend taught high school Chinese and history for several years. The letter describes how students always attended his classes brimming with energy and excitement, eager to learn. This friend was recognized as the youngest but most talented teacher at the school and was the most favored by students; people who knew him had high hopes for his future career. One day, however, his same-sex love for an old schoolmate was exposed and stirred up commotion within the local neighborhood. In the space of one evening, he was suddenly treated as if he were a completely different person. In addition to being fired, he was coerced to move to a faraway village and take up administrative work at a rural primary school, where he was put in charge of mundane tasks such as ringing the school bell and stoking the boiler.

When the author went to visit his friend, he found the latter in a dismal state and suffering from acute depression:

That young man brimming with talent was no longer to be seen. That extroverted and handsome young man was no more. His hair and beard were unkempt. His entire appearance was dirty and disheveled. When I ... encouraged him to ... ‘pull [him]self together, [and not to] fall into decline,’ he just grinned stupidly at me. His smile gave me

³⁰ *Aizhi Jianbao* was a newsletter started in 1994 by Wan Yanhai, a renowned Chinese public health and HIV/AIDS advocate. Wan Yanhai initiated the first AIDS hotline in Beijing, along with the “Men’s World” salon addressing male same-sex sexual relations.

a sense of dread because I could not discern if it stemmed from agonized helplessness or haughty ridicule... He just kept smiling and said: “You needn’t bother. My former behavior had the sole objective of hiding my ‘hooligan nature’” (*Aizhi Jianbao* 1998).

The author concluded that his “friend had been subjected to nothing other than a disguised case of ‘reform through education and labor’” that ensued from the exposé of his homosexuality, despite the fact that punishment for homosexual-related “hooliganism” was abolished (Li 2006, 93). This anecdote reveals how, even after decriminalization, serious threats to consensual same-sex conduct still persist in the form of social and political discrimination, which has resulted in the imposition of indirect administrative penalties and State disciplinary sanctions on homosexuals (Zhou 2000).

Comrade stories have attempted to articulate this relationship between social oppression and homosexuality through subjective narratives of maturation, known canonically as *bildungsroman*. Through fictional representations of homosexual characters as they navigate and position their *tongzhi* desires and identity, these stories portray Chinese homosexuals circumscribed within repressive paradigms. This chapter takes up “Huizi” (1999) 《辉子》 by Xiaohe (筱禾) as a queerly-inflected *bildungsroman* depicting young protagonists as they develop a sense of homosexual identity, infusing the Comrade story with the twofold potentiality of “coming-of-age” and “coming-out.” However, “Huizi” exhibits a turn away from traditional coming-of-age structures of totality wherein protagonists merge their homosexuality with the possibility of a fulfilling life. Instead, the narrative trajectory is defined by fragmentation and irresolution. The homosexual protagonist, when confronted by hegemonic norms of gender and sexuality, is ultimately deprived of the ability to reconcile his homoerotic desires with the object of his desire.

“Huizi” presents Huizi, the narrator’s best friend, as an abject body in relation to homosexuality that prompts the protagonist, Xiaoyang, to confront his own *tongzhi* abjections. In

analyzing this Comrade text, Judith Butler's theories on object materiality offer a politically efficacious perspective on the manifestation of bodily identity. In Butler's view, bodies come into being through "*a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter*" (1993, 9, emphasis in original). She contends that certain bodies are abjected by culture, in which the "materialization of the norm in bodily formation produce[s] a domain of abjected bodies" that "[fail] to qualify as fully human" and are not considered valued subjects in contemporary culture (Butler 1993, 16). These bodies represent the "constitutive outside" as "delegitimated bodies that fail to count as 'bodies,'" thereby exposing the limits of social constructivism precisely because they exemplify bodies that do not enter into the symbolic or discursive realm (Butler 1993, 15).

The titular character in "Huizi" represents an alienated/ing alterity for Xiaoyang and conveys the process of marginalization that abjects and relegates the Comrade body to the margins of society, to what Butler terms "the shadowy regions of ontology" (Meijer and Beukje 1998, 277). The Comrade story positions homosexual identity as one constructed around a lifelong legacy of abjection, resistance, and conflict. "Huizi" rejects *tongzhi* utopias in favor of baring the formidable and perhaps insurmountable obstacles along the path towards accepting a homosexual identity in contemporary China. The narrative investigates the insecurities, doubts, and personal struggles that plague adolescent homosexual characters during the formative years of a *tongzhi* identity. Nonetheless, Xiaoyang's acts of identification with Huizi can be interpreted as socio-politically and discursively subversive – a process that recasts the homosexual body as an active site that renegotiates regulatory norms. In this way, the Comrade story offers a fictional framework exposing the constructed and changeable status of hegemonic heteronormativity.

The adolescent boys' mirroring relationship and parallel maturation experiences places an emphasis on sociocultural markers of identity, revealing how Comrade bodies that fail to fit

normative criteria become abject. At the same time, the work in question functions as a textual exploration of corporeality, revealing how the Comrade body is sexualized, gendered, and queered, insisting on a material body that, through its very materiality, can serve as politically subversive. Ultimately, however, both young boys are enclosed not within a normative identification with heterosexuality and patriarchal hegemonic values, but within a profoundly negative identification with homosexuality and estrangement from the nuclear family in Chinese society.

[Huizi: Adolescent Comrade Same-Sex Friendship and Desire]

“Huizi” tells the story of two adolescent boys, Xiaoyang and Huizi, who grow up together in one of Beijing’s old courtyard neighborhoods. They are both promising students, but Xiaoyang constantly feels outdone by Huizi. One day, Huizi gets involved in a group fight where someone is killed and is sentenced to work in a re-education labor camp for two years. When he comes out, there is little hope that Huizi will be able to return to school with this criminal record, and so he starts working while Xiaoyang prepares for his university exams. During this time, Xiaoyang discovers that he is in love with Huizi. While the two boys do not directly discuss their feelings, Xiaoyang believes that his love is not requited when Huizi starts dating girls, but does not realize that Huizi was merely trying to deflect suspicion about his homosexual inclinations. Feeling dejected and conflicted about his homoerotic desire for Huizi, Xiaoyang decides to attend university in Shanghai to purge all the “filthy thoughts on [his] mind” (1). However, when Xiaoyang returns to Beijing for the holidays, he learns about Huizi’s relationship with Xiaowei, another boy. At this point, Xiaoyang realizes that Huizi intentionally deterred his expression of homosexuality to protect Xiaoyang from also becoming a social outcast.

When Xiaoyang returns to university, he struggles with homoerotic desires. Huizi's socially ostracized life convinces Xiaoyang that homosexuality is "dangerous" and "abnormal," motivating Xiaoyang to date girls to try and become "normal" (2). Nonetheless, these heterosexual relationships are fleeting and Xiaoyang meets anonymous gay men in grungy places for sex. Xiaoyang eventually decides he should suppress all forms of sexual desire by studying hard and forbidding himself from having any "unhealthy" thoughts. Soon after graduating, Xiaoyang gets married. Huizi attends the wedding to wish the couple good fortune, and informs Xiaoyang that he intends to spend his life with his gay lover, Xiaowei.

After the wedding, Xiaoyang and his wife move to a small town near the sea and have a son. A few years pass before Xiaoyang receives a letter from his parents informing him that Huizi had been sent back to prison because of his homosexual relationship. Xiaoyang visits the labor camp to find Huizi in a disheveled state and promises to look for Xiaowei, as the latter has no idea why his boyfriend disappeared. Xiaoyang not only reestablishes contact between the two gay lovers, but also goes out of his way to urge Huizi's sister to support her brother in his choice to live as a homosexual. The story ends with Xiaoyang returning to his wife and son; at home, he gazes at the gift Huizi bestowed him on his wedding day – a golden ring which has the character for "fortune" engraved on it. During this wavering moment, the question of whether Xiaoyang has actually found happiness by suppressing his homosexual feelings for Huizi lingers unanswered.

This ambivalent conclusion suggests that Xiaoyang will continue to grapple with the discrepancy between his homosexual fantasies and heterosexual reality, bringing the narrative full circle. By concluding the story in the present time where Xiaoyang looks at the ring and ponders Huizi's influence on his life, the scene reverts to the introduction where the narrator reflects:

‘Huizi’ was my nickname for Li Zhanghui; ‘Hooligan’ is the status that everybody ultimately condemned him to. Huizi and I grew up together in the same neighborhood (1).

This opening statement sets up the parallel maturation process of two adolescent boys – the narrator, Xiaoyang, and Huizi. However, the parallelism of the favorable nickname “Huizi” with the deprecating social label of “Hooligan” immediately conveys a melancholic tone, foreboding the queerly-inflected *bildungsroman* storyline about to unfold. In Chinese, “Huizi” (辉子) can be literally translated to mean “the splendid son” or “radiant boy,” and positively connotes “brightness” or “glory.” In contrast, the term “Hooligan” insinuates negative associations as the pervasive criminal designation for homosexuals in contemporary China. This stark juxtaposition of Li Zhanghui’s two monikers – “Huizi” and “Hooligan” – in the very first sentence therefore foreshadows the narrative’s trajectory concerning a once-outstanding individual who has tragically fallen off his pedestal due to homosexual relations.

Butler’s discussion of “the relation between the materiality of bodies and that of language” offers a useful interpretive lens to analyze “Huizi” in terms of a Comrade “account of how it is that bodies materialize, ... how they come to assume ... the shape by which their material discreteness is marked” (1993, 69). Drawing upon “Lacan’s ... account of the genesis of bodily boundaries,” Butler posits that “[b]odies only become whole, i.e., totalities, by the idealizing and totalizing specular image which is sustained through time by the *sexually marked name*” (1993, 72, emphasis added). For Comrade bodies, the moniker of “Hooligan” is one such “sexually marked name” gesturing at Butler’s notion that “to be named is thus to be inculcated into [the paternal] law and to be formed, bodily, in accordance with that law” (Butler 1993, 72). Hence, by juxtaposing “Huizi” and “Hooligan” as designations both representative of Li Zhanghui, the Comrade narrative contests the inseparability of language and body. This literary strategy questions the deterministic dependence on regulatory discourse shaping corporeal constructions

of sex and gender, exposing the need to reconsider the homosexual body in relation to other ways of meaning.

Xiaoyang and Huizi are childhood best friends, but the personalities of the two boys are differentiated from the start. The narrator continually looks up to Huizi as his role model and emulates his behavior, and these repeated acts of mirroring become a distinct feature of their adolescent friendship. In the narrator's eyes, the young Huizi personified ideal masculine features glorified by conventional Chinese society. Xiaoyang tells us that Huizi was a good-natured, caring, and bright boy who effortlessly excelled in everything he did; he describes experiences they had together catching grasshoppers, collecting cigarette cases, playing sports, and studying. Each and every time, Huizi would do significantly better than Xiaoyang, and the narrator comments that while he usually "tried to follow everything Huizi did," he always had to "accept brother Huizi's help" in the end (1). Accordingly, Huizi was always favored by teachers; adults in their neighborhood also frequently praised him. Although Xiaoyang greatly admires and respects Huizi's capabilities, as they enter middle school, he starts to feel increasingly "jealous and envious of [Huizi]" (1). These sentiments compel him to "silently [swear] to catch up to brother Huizi, to become just like him and perhaps even surpass him in academics" (1).

Coming-of-age narratives explore adolescent identity, typically centered on the protagonists' emerging realizations of their relationships to others and to the world in which they live. In "Huizi," the narrator's adolescent identity is portrayed through his mimetic relationship with another boy. The narrative articulates how Xiaoyang constantly examines himself in terms of his adolescent friendship with Huizi, indicating that this mirroring process influences Xiaoyang's progression through various stages of identity formation and sexual maturation. While there is no explicit indication that the relationship between Xiaoyang and Huizi will develop into anything more than friendship until more than halfway into the story, Xiaoyang's

mimetic behaviors demonstrate the fluidity of identity arising from continual reiterated acts. This process can be interpreted through Jacques Lacan's theory of how subjective identity is constructed through the imitation of external images.

Lacan's 1949 essay on "The Mirror Stage" describes human development in relation to the idea that when an infant sees its own reflection in a mirror, it "jubilantly" misrecognizes the image as an idealized self, and tries to control what it sees through its own movements.³¹

According to the logic of the mirror stage, sense of self comes only from the outside in, through an "other" in the form of an external image and the infant's identification with this image.

Although Lacan warns that the infant's identification with its external image is a misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) of self, he nevertheless implies that there is always a moment of jubilant identification for the infant's subject formation (Eng 2001). But what happens in situations where non-normative gender and sexual identification interrupts this smooth process of self-discovery? In "Huizi," as Xiaoyang becomes aware of how his sexual difference is at odds with Chinese heteronormative ideals, his desire to identify and merge with Huizi – and by extension, a homosexual identity – becomes an increasingly impossible prospect, leading not to joy but to bitter dejection.³²

In coming-of-age narratives, Kristin VanNamen (2010) summarizes in her book on adolescent friendship that the act of identifying with and imitating an external image is evident when adolescents "form their primary identities through mirroring the behaviors and

³¹ As Lacan explains further in *Seminar II*, the self "finds its unity in the image of the other ... and it is jammed, sucked in by the image, the deceiving and realized image, of the other, or equally by its own specular image" (1954b, 54).

³² It is also key to recognize that Butler's work in *Gender Trouble* (1990) adopts Lacan's mirror stage model to elucidate how individuals come to embody social roles, particularly gender roles, through acts of mimesis which become habitual. Along the lines of Butler's analysis, individuals continuously misrecognize external images as idealized selves and embody gender and other roles through reiterative acts. However, like the infant's uncoordinated movements in Lacan's analogy, these performances always fail to completely reconstruct the imaginary ideal (Butler 1990). Butler's reading of Lacan posits performance as the introjection of the environment into the self, where individuals imitate and internalize dominant heteronormative behaviors (Butler 1990). This process of mirroring idealized external images creates a liminal space where boundaries between self and world are potentially crossed, deconstructed, and reproduced.

internalizing the value systems of their closest friends” (14).³³ In line with this argument, Xiaoyang emulates Huizi’s behavior in an attempt to become more like Huizi, merging “self” and “object of identification.” Xiaoyang and Huizi’s mirroring relationship hence influences the protagonist’s interpretation of values as they relate to cultural norms in a patriarchal society. Ironically, however, this mimesis results in a *divergence* of identity formation and an inability to achieve a jubilant state as the “object of identification” and “self” fail to merge. This divergence parallels the incongruities of public social status and private sexual experience that Chinese homosexuals confront in the real world.

The difference in physical characteristics as well as socioeconomic background of the two boys is evident from the first few paragraphs of the story. Xiaoyang is a “small and scrawny boy, with clumsy hands and feet” who is constantly teased or bullied by other children (1). In contrast, Huizi is “taller and stronger than [Xiaoyang’s] real older brother” and “always protects [Xiaoyang] from being bullied by the other children” (1). From a child’s perspective, the narrator comments that both houses his family owned were “all much bigger than Brother Huizi’s only house,” and remarks that both of his parents had “normal jobs,” whereas Huizi’s father “worked at the neighborhood vegetable market ... moving boxes of vegetables” (1). Huizi’s impoverished socioeconomic background is further emphasized when Xiaoyang describes the dilapidated state of Huizi’s house:

Brother Huizi’s house is tiny; his room is so small you can hardly fit in a single bed with a side table, and the roof also always leaks... It gets freezing cold in the winter, but whenever I visit he never turns on the heat... I often heard my parents talking about how Huizi’s parents should get their landlord to do maintenance on their house... But it was only after a few years that I found out their landlord had repeatedly refused to make the repairs and they had no money to fix the problems themselves (1).

³³ Various scholars have further explored and developed theories illustrating how adolescent social mirroring processes result in the merging of identities (e.g.: Chu 2004; VanNamen 2010; Way 2012). More specifically, studies have highlighted that adolescent friendships have substantial influence on the mimetic development of sexual behaviors (Sieving *et al.* 2006).

Each boy's distinct personality attributes are thus contrasted with their family backgrounds. These passages foreshadow that despite Xiaoyang and Huizi's intimate adolescent friendship and mirroring behaviors, divergent socioeconomic class backgrounds will introduce relational fissures as they grow up.

[Comrade Childhood, Origins of Subjectivity, and Social Difference]

The first inflection point occurs when Huizi gets involved in a fight that condemns him to a life marked by a criminal record, an event that leads to Xiaoyang's budding awareness of his strong attachment to Huizi. One day, Xiaoyang hears a rumor about the "little hooligans" – a classmate, Du Hai, and his notorious friend, "Little White Rabbit" – setting up a fight with a boy from Xuanwu district after school. When Xiaoyang shares the news with Huizi, both boys decide to get involved. However, just before the fight, Xiaoyang's older brother forces Xiaoyang to return home to study. After a few hours, Huizi rushes over and reports on the "extremely mortifying battle" where the boy from Xuanwu "died on the spot" but that he himself "only managed to make a gesture or two from the side ... and didn't even hit him" (2). Within a few days, Huizi was imprisoned by the police. Xiaoyang describes the dramatic changes that occurred overnight:

This event shocked everyone... Nobody ever thought that the well-mannered and promising boy from the Li family would be a 'little hooligan.' In the space of one evening, Huizi's father never smiled again, and had as much vitality as a block of frost. My own father said he felt sorry for Huizi, but when he spoke I could see delight lined in his forehead (2).

Here, Xiaoyang's subtle but unnerving observation that his own father took "delight" in Huizi's misfortune reveals a heartless, hypocritical community that finds pleasure in others' misfortune and the proscription of freedom.

The conversational mention of “little hooligans” and an unidentified “Little White Rabbit” forebodes the divergent identities that Huizi and Xiaoyang develop throughout the rest of the story. Although no homoerotic content is yet evident at this point in the narrative, references to hooliganism and rabbits premeditate homosexuality as a point of rupture for the two boys’ adolescent friendship and mirroring relationship. As previously mentioned, “hooligan” (流氓 *liumang*) is the most pervasive criminal label for homosexuals in contemporary China. Similarly, “rabbit” (兔子 *tuzi*) is a colloquial pejorative term used to refer to homosexuals in modern Chinese society.³⁴ Accordingly, it is after Huizi’s encounter with the “little hooligan” and “Little White Rabbit” that he is unfairly condemned to a life marked by a criminal record and stigmatized by homosexuality.

The use of these idiomatic expressions manifests what Julia Kristeva, in *Powers of Horror* (1982), elucidates concerning the “writing [of] hatred,” where “emotion, in order to make itself heard, adopts colloquial speech or, when it acknowledges its hatred straightforwardly, slang” (191). In her view, “the vocabulary of slang, because of its strangeness, its very violence, and especially because the reader does not always understand [its origins], is ... a radical instrument of separation, of rejection, and, at the limit, of hatred” that underscores the “emptiness of meaning” of those labels (Kristeva 1982, 191). The adoption of colloquial terms alluding to homosexuality explicates the story’s stylistic strategy of rebellion against the negative stereotypes of same-sex desire, exposing the emptiness of those misrepresentations.

³⁴ Although Chinese historians such as Sullivan and Jackson (2001), Chou (2000), and Kang (2009) have traced the usage of the term *tuzi* (兔子) in China back to pre-modern times as an allusion to same-sex practices, the exact origins of this phrase remains unclear. Scholars such as Syonzi (1998) and Peterson (2002) have argued that the term derives from Chinese folklore. They cite that *Tu Er Shen* (兔兒神), whose name literally translates as the “rabbit deity,” managed the love and sex in male-male relationships. Other postulations have revolved around the notion that people in pre-modern Chinese society believed male rabbits commonly mated with other males. As a term for same-sex practices did not exist in ancient China, people invoked rabbit imagery to represent it instead.

During the years of Huizi's imprisonment, Xiaoyang feels miserable about their separation, saying that he "had no friends, kept to himself every day," and is tormented by thoughts about "whether [he] was the one who harmed Brother Huizi" (2). When Huizi is released, Xiaoyang is initially overjoyed, but soon confused by how much things have changed. Huizi first finds amusement but then annoyance that Xiaoyang did not understand why Huizi could not return to school with a "hooligan" criminal record. Nonetheless, Xiaoyang continues to mimic Huizi's behavior. When Huizi flippantly asserts that studying is useless and that he can be more successful working, Xiaoyang insistently questions his own academic motivations:

I suddenly realized that all my effort and expectations were for nothing. Why do I need to study? Why do I need to work so hard to read books and do practice problems? Before I had a mission [to surpass Huizi], but now that that mission is gone, I do not have any passion for studying at all (3).

Likewise, when Xiaoyang sees Huizi smoking and gaining popularity with other friends, he clumsily tries to start chain smoking as well. However, such mimetic behaviors are prematurely terminated – Xiaoyang eventually takes his university examinations as originally planned and his attempt to pick up a smoking habit only exacerbates his social ineptitude. Even so, Xiaoyang's parents, like "wild cats protecting their litter from predators," persistently try to prevent their son from spending time with Huizi (3).

Socially constrained by his parents, Xiaoyang is raised with the indoctrination of filial piety where males were to grow up, find a wife, marry, and have sons to carry on the patrilineal family name. Xiaoyang witnesses how demonstrations of deviance from the community's heteronormative assumptions are castigated, observing how Huizi's own parents label him a "rotten hooligan" (臭流氓 *chouliumang*) or someone who "plays with hooliganism" (耍流氓 *shualiumang*) (2). Thus, Xiaoyang has no choice but to negotiate his sexuality through resistance to the heterosexual convention. This scathing lexicon of circumvention speaks to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's study of the role of conflict within the formative years of queer identities. In her

work on *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), Sedgwick argues that homosexual youth “are exposed to their culture’s ... high ambient homophobia long before either they or those who care for them know that they are among those who most urgently need to define themselves against it” (81). As such, the unmentionable nature of deviant identities in “Huizi” addresses the intersection of conflict and homosexual experience in a narrow-minded social environment.

The threatening myopia of the community is illustrated when Huizi’s mother lashes out at him for chatting with a girl in the courtyard, calling them “rotten hooligans” and telling them to “get lost” (2). This episode sets up a principal difficulty for Xiaoyang in coming to terms with his own sexual preferences: a neighborhood that endorses nothing but heterosexuality also condemns casual opposite-sex relations as reprehensible, libidinous, and above all, aberrant. Xiaoyang faces a contradiction that subverts and queers any expression of sexual intimacy in this story. The neighborhood’s interdiction of all non-procreative sexual acts – both heterosexual and homosexual relations – as “hooliganism” forms part of a disciplinary framework in which all manifestations of the sexual body are illicit. As a result, celibacy – a complete absence of sex – is the only option.

Huizi’s own mother refuses to call him his proper name, instead denigrating him as a “rotten hooligan,” demonstrating Butler’s claims that “materiality is bound up with signification from the start” where “the mimetic or representational status of language ... is productive, constitutive, one might even argue *performative*, inasmuch as this signifying act delimits and contours the body that it then claims to find prior to any and all signification” (Butler 1993, 30, emphasis in original). In Butler’s view, language serves as a medium through which matter is produced, molded, and constructed; discourse is a vital condition of materiality, as what is needed to posit

materiality in the first place (Wilson 2001).³⁵ By labeling Huizi a “rotten hooligan,” his mother posits and signifies his materiality as an abject body and “constitutive outside” to the hegemonic norms of Chinese society (Butler 1993, 15). Additionally, this naming of Huizi as an abject body, a body that represents “matter’s radical alterity,” exemplifies how language does not “simply refer to materiality” but is “also the very condition under which materiality may be said to appear” (Butler 1993, 31). The particular language used to describe Huizi, therefore, constructs his body as abject – as a materialization of deviation from heteronormalcy that is delegitimized and fails to “qualify as [a body] that matters” – and relegates it to the margins of society (Butler 1993, 16).

When Xiaoyang witnesses Huizi’s mother scathing disapproval of her own son at the same time he begins to find himself increasingly drawn to identification with Huizi, he reacts in a profoundly negative manner, withdrawing from interpersonal relations in a defensive attempt to avert conflict with other persons. On this point, Lacan tells us in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (1977) that any jubilant sense of identification with an external image hinges on collective social affirmation: it is only when the cumulative looks of others provide symbolic validation and social support that the subject can gain access to the desired image. Without widespread social validation, jubilant identification is unstable, and the subject is left with a profound sense of fragmentation, disunity, and loss. In particular, the mother’s look plays a pivotal role of social validation and gendered support for the baby, compensating for what no other single look can compare to: the gaze (Lacan 1977). Without the mother’s gaze, an

³⁵ Related to this issue of language and the body, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has posited in her article, “The Body Politic” (1989), that bodily materiality and the construction of human sexuality is inextricable from discourse: “Human sexuality is emblematic of the interconnectedness of the material and discursive. Discourse constructs our perceptions of the body and the erotic at the same time as discourses themselves borrow from the body and the erotic to render themselves evocative and expressive (101).” Smith-Rosenberg emphasizes “the interconnectedness of the material and discursive,” whereas Butler’s theories take a step further to insist that “[t]he body posited as prior to the sign, is always *posited* or *signified* as prior” (1993:30, emphasis in original).

infant is deprived of the emotional capacity to connect with others, and human interaction is itself perceived as terrifying.³⁶

According to the Lacanian view, Xiaoyang subscribes to the neighborhood's intolerance in response to the broken intimacy he perceives between Huizi and his mother, echoing the adults' judgments that "Li Zhanghui has hit rock bottom, fully becoming a depraved hooligan" (2). Instead, Xiaoyang distinguishes himself as "an ideal model student, someone who doesn't fight, studies hard, and doesn't get into relationships" (2). This development also evinces Butler's argument about abjection as a discursive process where "bodies which fail to materialize provide the necessary 'outside,' ... for the bodies which, in materializing the norm, qualify as bodies that matter" (1993, 16). For Xiaoyang, Huizi's abjected "hooligan" body serves as an ultimate Other, a figure of an alienated/ing alterity that does not exist in the same way as a (hetero)normative body does, prompting Xiaoyang to conduct himself in opposition to that abjection.

However, Xiaoyang soon becomes aware of the parochial and injudicious reactions of the neighborhood. In particular, he notices that when Huizi is convicted for the second time on specious grounds during a "Strike Hard" (严打 *yanda*) policing campaign, "nobody really even cared about it ... it was almost as if it was a very natural and expected thing [for Huizi] to be imprisoned again" (2). Only the elderly Great Grandpa Zhao lamented that "once children get

³⁶ In a highly influential essay, "The Mirror-Role of Mother and Family in Child Development," psychologist Donald Winnicott (1967) builds upon Lacan's mirror stage to elaborate on the role of the mother as a "mirror" to provide the infant with a shared experience of human emotion and foster its own sense of self identity. If the mother fails to mirror, rejecting the needs of the infant or failing to identify with its feelings, the infant will "organize withdrawal" in defense against the "threat of chaos" and an "atrophy" of its sense of self (Winnicott 1967:3-4). In this situation, Winnicott claims that the child will then withdraw into a "false self," a self that compulsively anticipates the expectations and reactions of others (1967:4). Throughout the story, Xiaoyang comments on his lonely existence where he "wanders around alone everyday" and that "aside from Huizi ... [he] doesn't have any other friends" (2). Such behavior speaks to Winnicott's theory that a child, when deprived of a sense of mutual understanding and shared feeling, exhibits a withdrawal into a "false self" constructed around what he believes others expect of him. Xiaoyang is unable to establish emotional contact with others on the basis of his fledgling sense of (homo)sexual self, and this absence of inner trustworthiness is projected into an outside world that is perceived as uncaring and harsh.

thrown into prison the first time, you can be sure that they will be in there again many more times” (2). This proclamation highlights the ill-fated manner in which a callous society unsympathetically codes Huizi’s homosexual identity as hooligan behavior – as something unmentionable, incorrigible, and inevitable.

In Butlerian parlance, the reconsideration of an abjected body that “nobody really even cared about” is a crucial political move that renegotiates who or what counts as a body that matters (2; Butler 1993). Butler refers to this as the “politicization of abjection” where “the public assertion of ‘queerness’ enacts performativity as citationality for the purposes of resignifying the abjection of homosexuality into defiance and legitimacy” (1993, 21). In “Huizi,” the contentious label of “hooliganism” embodied by the figure of Huizi hence “might be understood ... as a specific reworking of abjection into political agency,” exhibited when Xiaoyang attempts to navigate the nuances of his experiences in contemporary Chinese society through identification with Huizi (Butler 1993, 21).

After Huizi is convicted again, Xiaoyang ponders how he “doesn’t know what sitting in prison feels like, but [believes] that it would be more comfortable than going to the best class in a top school” (2). He then expounds upon how he “sits in a room and does problem, after problem, after problem,” has teachers berating him for every mistake akin to prison guards barking after inmates, and imagines that he is steadily counting down to the day of his university examinations and subsequent liberation the same way Huizi is counting down the days until he is set free from prison (2). The ironic parallelism of Xiaoyang’s incarceration at school to Huizi’s life in detainment criticizes the prohibitive Chinese heteronormative paradigm that deprives youth of the ability to shape their own sexual identities.

In contemporary China, the central social institution that Chinese youth confront, other than the family, is the education system (Farrer 2006). Since 1949, the State has enforced a

“naturalized order” for sex, gender, and marriage, seeing such an intervention as necessary to ensure its economic, political, and social goals (McMillan 2006). This model of sex and gender establishes the pro-creative family as the bedrock of socialist renewal and constructs the human body with a sexual function mandated by male or female sex organs, rejecting all bodies that do not fit rigid heteronormative distinctions. Until today, the Chinese state attempts to control adolescent sexuality through prohibitive rules and threats of expulsion from educational institutions (Farrer 2006). In this way, Xiaoyang’s mapping of his experiences in the educational institution onto Huizi’s extra-institutional “hooligan” prison lifestyle denotes the synecdochic displacement of the homosocial within the Chinese heteronormative sphere. Xiaoyang’s predicament hence becomes one where he has to grow up into an identity that is unmentionable in any positive or helpful context. He gradually internalizes his own difference from those around him, unsteadily struggling between discretion and disclosure of his sexuality.

When Huizi is released for the second time, he sets up a stall selling bottled drinks. While Xiaoyang is relieved to see Huizi again, he perceives a tangible detachment when he realizes they have nothing to say to each other, where “the awkwardness of adults now exists between two youth” (2). Nonetheless, Xiaoyang feels ostracized from Huizi’s new working lifestyle; he feels the pressure to “escape from Huizi,” yet is hopelessly unable to distract himself from yearning to be with the older boy (2). At this point, it is possible to understand Xiaoyang’s irrepressible urge to attach himself to Huizi in tandem with Lacan’s description of a jubilant infant’s desire to laminate itself with its mirror reflection. However, Xiaoyang’s subjectivity alternates between jubilant recognition and paranoid dissociation with the imago and object of desire he identifies in Huizi, leading to an overwhelming effect of alienation.

[The Comrade Mirror Stage and Self-Abjection]

When Xiaoyang accompanies Huizi on a day at work, his homosexual feelings are awakened at the same time he realizes that he and Huizi lead irrevocably different lives. During a conversation about Huizi's experiences in prison, Xiaoyang pleads Huizi not to get involved with ruffians or into any trouble with the police again. Huizi disinterestedly shrugs off Xiaoyang's appeal, stating that his "life is already ruined anyway" and teases: "Why do I have to listen to you? Are you my wife?" (3). In response, Xiaoyang indignantly challenges that as long as Huizi dares to be his "husband," being Huizi's "wife ... is no big deal" (3). By making claims to being Huizi's "wife," Xiaoyang positions their same-sex relationship within the heterosexual paradigm and exposes the fictive influence of biological sex on gender roles.

However, Huizi suddenly turns grave and tells Xiaoyang that he "shouldn't learn bad [things]" (3). While Xiaoyang is initially unsure about what Huizi is referring to, he later reflects:

That conversation is one that I will never forget for the rest of my life – it was like an alarm, brutally forcing me awake with the recognition that I am, in fact, 'learning bad things'! For the first time, I was shocked, confused, distressed, and even terrified by my feelings for Huizi. When I later reminisced on that dialogue, I realized that Huizi and I had very different understandings of the definition of a wife. I was thinking of emotion, but Huizi was probably thinking of sex (3).

By pointing out alternate definitions of the ideal "wife" based on either psychological (i.e., emotional) or physical (i.e., sexual) roles, this passage underscores the tenuous conception of the socially accepted intersection of gender and sexuality. The delineation of gendered feelings and sexual acts vis-à-vis the female role of by a wife evokes Butler's reformulation of the materiality of bodies" to challenge the "process of 'assuming' a sex with the question of *identification*, and with the discursive means by which the heterosexual imperative enables certain sexed identifications and forecloses and/or disavows other identifications" (2004b, 3, emphasis in original). Throughout "Huizi," Xiaoyang grapples with the conflict between his feminine behavior and homoerotic desires within a male body, problematizing the notion of gender

performativity in relation to the materialization of the sexed body as it is contoured during the adolescent maturation process.

That same day, Xiaoyang witnesses Huizi's alternate personalities as he interacts with others: Huizi charitably gives away a drink to a thirsty girl and her mother, but also threatens two men with a broken beer bottle, extorting them for money. Xiaoyang is struck with the revelation that even though he and Huizi "grew up together in the same neighborhood, and have had a very close relationship [since young], they were now people living in two different worlds" (3). After that day, Xiaoyang feels "apprehensive and worried about his sexual inclinations" yet "cannot resist stealthily observing Huizi" at every chance, where the narrative elaborates on detailed descriptions of Huizi's physical body. In particular, Xiaoyang is captivated by Huizi's experiences in prison and how they have shaped his "sturdy character and muscular physique" (4). This fascination with the experience of transgression that marks Huizi as a "hooligan" and social outcast – as the abject and what Kristeva terms the "jettisoned object" – ironically strengthens the mirroring behavior between the two boys where Xiaoyang desires to better understand "those feelings that [he himself] does not understand but increases in intensity around Huizi" (4). Reading this scene according to Kristeva's logic, the object that is always desired is the one that is never attained, where the desiring subject (Xiaoyang) can never gain the satisfaction of possessing the object (homosexual relations embodied by Huizi).³⁷ By desiring Huizi because of his abject "hooligan" body, then, Xiaoyang not only seeks to understand his homoerotic feelings for Huizi, but also to define his own homosexual identity.

³⁷ Kristeva popularized the notion of "abjection" to describe the constitution of the "self" in the psycho-analytic sense through the systematic discharge of "foreign" and "unclean" elements (1982, 3). With regard to homosexuality and the "erotic, sexual, and desiring mainspring of abjection," Kristeva draws upon Proust to articulate that: "[I]f the object of desire is real it can only rest upon the abject, which is impossible to fulfill. The object of love then becomes unmentionable, a double of the subject, similar to it, but improper, because it is inseparable from an impossible identity. Loving desire is thus felt as an inner fold within that impossible identity, as an accident of narcissism, ob-ject, painful alteration, delightfully and dramatically condemned to find the other in the same sex only" (1982, 21).

As a result of their intimate same-sex friendship, Xiaoyang's overwhelming homoerotic desire for Huizi on the one hand and the stubborn psychic distance from him on the other creates a tension where Xiaoyang "feels empty inside" and is unable to merge his desire for Huizi with a homosexual identity (4). Xiaoyang feels that Huizi has no intention of returning his love, especially when Huizi starts dating Xiaowei, another boy. Crestfallen, Xiaoyang decides to leave to Shanghai for university to get away from Huizi. Fully aware of the heterosexual trajectory he is expected to follow, Xiaoyang attempts to purge himself of his homosexual desire:

I started to caress my body, and imagined that these were Huizi's hands I felt... I whispered his name and felt my body become weighty, as if he lay down on top of me. I gazed at him in joy and with my hand I stroked his handsome face... But there was no Huizi; his hands, his lips, his caresses were never there. My hands were only full of sticky body fluid. I stood up to clean off my own semen. I relentlessly used toilet paper to wipe my hands, but they would not get clean, tiny pieces of paper kept getting stuck all over my hands. I wiper harder! Harder!

... I walked out the house into the yard, turned on the water pump, bent over and put my head under the gushing water... The ice-cold clear water slowly washed away the dry summer heat. As more water gushed out, the colder it became, and the cold started to hurt... But I didn't want to stop; I needed the pain. I wanted to completely wash away the body fluids on my hands, the tears on my face, and the filthy thoughts on my mind.

I started my life as a university student after flushing out my filthy body with that icy water. I was so naïve to think that the tormenting stream of water could wash away my love for Huizi and my desire for men. Who knew the water of Beijing would turn out to be so unreliable (4).

Xiaoyang's masochistic behavior and tone of self-denial evokes themes of abjection, in general, and self-abjection, in particular. This attempt to (re)constitute himself through a systematic expulsion of homoerotic elements that Xiaoyang perceives as "filthy" and "foreign" can be analyzed by way of Kristeva's emphasis that abjection's expulsion of the Self's "Other" is itself intimately related to the Self's expulsion of "it-self" (1982, 6).

According to Kristeva's logic, sperm is one of the "horrors [from] within" that "show[s] up in order to reassure a subject that is lacking its 'own and clean self.' The abjection of ... flows from within suddenly become the sole 'object' of sexual desire – a

true ‘ab-ject’ (1982, 54).³⁸ Thus, Xiaoyang’s ejaculate symbolizes the “unclean” and “dejected” self, “the horror within,” showing up “to compensate for the collapse of the border between inside and outside” – between his internal homoerotic desires and external heteronormative reality (Kristeva 1982, 53). In this sense, Xiaoyang’s dismay at the realization that “there was no Huizi” and that his “hands were only full of sticky body fluid” reinforces a homosexual abjection as part of his identity. The ejaculate from a fantasy about Huizi materializes the very “ab-ject” of homoerotic desire that Xiaoyang is trying to exorcise from his sense of self and university life, ironically cementing it as a fundamental aspect of his subjectivity (4).

As such, it can be read that Xiaoyang’s “self-abjection” is configured through a tormented attempt to purge himself of the “filthy thoughts on [his] mind” that infect his body, where the Self “it-self” comes to assume the foreign, polluted qualities of the abject – the semen that he “tries to cleanse himself of, tirelessly” when he frantically wipes and washes it away (Kristeva 1982, 6). Xiaoyang is unable to control the physical manifestation of pollutive desires which have entered his mind and body, indicating a process of corporal alienation from one’s own desires, or alternatively, a cleavage of desire from the object of desire itself.

The ejaculate provides a provocative closing image to this chapter in the story, crystallizing not just the psychic or historical aspects of Xiaoyang’s homoerotic desire and abjection of self but also its constitutive (homo)sexual foreclosure. In its sticky gooiness, the ejaculate denotes not only sodomy and anal penetration but the process of same-sex identification itself: Xiaoyang’s confrontation with his own sperm signifies the

³⁸ As Elizabeth Grosz, French feminist academic, further writes in her discussion of Kristeva’s work, “Abjection is a sickness at one’s own body, at the body beyond that ‘clean and proper’ thing, the body of the subject. Abjection is the result of recognizing that the body is more than, in excess of, the ‘clean and proper’” (1989:78). The abject body upsets the yearning for social propriety and physical self-control, repeatedly violating its own boundaries (Grosz 1989).

non-procreative homosexual body as a site where hope for rebirth and reproduction is short-circuited. Its very existence paradoxically denies and attests to homosexuality – it indicates that Xiaoyang both does and does not desire same-sex relations. Moreover, the defensive attempt to purge his homoerotic desire through the very act of indulging in it brings forth the fact that on a conscious level Xiaoyang cannot yet see what he has perhaps already acknowledged on an unconscious level: his homosexual identity. Through Xiaoyang's concurrent disavowal and affirmation of his homosexual desires, it is possible to understand how he can simultaneously exist yet not exist as a (self-denying) homosexual.

Another interesting detail is the vivid description of water that Xiaoyang subjects his body to. As discussed in the previous chapter, flowing water has traditionally been used as a cultural symbol in Chinese literature to represent purification and fertility or the overwhelming and uncontrollable surge of passion (Huang 2001). In particular, vigorously moving water alludes to sexual arousal but also emphasizes the destructive power of erotic emotion. As such, by submerging his body under “gushing” and “ice-cold” water that “stimulates” and “causes pain” in an attempt to purify and repress his feelings, the narration foreshadows that Xiaoyang's homosexual desire is irrepressible and will relentlessly resurface (4).

Xiaoyang's experience of erotic arousal is conspicuously de-eroticized, and his sexual climax appears to serve a mere perfunctory purpose in marking a figurative transition point. The ejaculate, rather than being a conventional metonym for heterosexual corporal reproduction, instead connotes its potentially sublimated significance as a figure for homosexual “textual” reproduction. Xiaoyang's homosexual fantasy and subsequent almost horrified response to his own semen signifies an attempt

to end his homoerotic desire for Huizi, but at the same time signals the start of nostalgic memorialization and sustained textual existence of their same-sex relations through the writing of “Huizi” itself.

While attending university in Shanghai, Xiaoyang “swear[s] to himself” that his reasons for not returning to Beijing were “not because of Huizi” and an attempt to avoid confronting his feelings for him (5). He immerses himself in studying to suppress his “filthy” thoughts of Huizi, declaring that “when every problem is solved, it is a simple, relaxing, and happy thing. Not like other [things] that are always messy and pointless, such as parent-child relations, friendships, or love” (5). Nonetheless, he remains preoccupied with the need to “overcome [his] mental weakness, and get rid of those immoral, absurd thoughts,” reflecting that:

At that time I often looked in the mirror, and all kinds of overwhelming feelings would come up. I saw sadness about being different from others, pity for the loneliness in my heart, helplessness about not having any other choice but to seek solitude, but pride for my own bravery to make that choice. I did not go home that year to spend the Spring Festival with my family, because I was hurt, struggling, conflicted, and wanted to escape... Later I finally understood; it was because I was selfish (6).

Xiaoyang’s confrontation with his image in the mirror proves to be intensely alienating, reflecting the estrangement and self-abjection of a homosexual identity defined by “immoral, absurd thoughts” as a central theme (6). In this passage, the effect of referencing a physical mirror is trifold: it suggests Lacan’s mirror stage and Xiaoyang’s mirroring relationship with Huizi with regard to self-identity formation, but also alludes to traditional Chinese aesthetics, where the mirror is frequently used as a figure not for the reflection of physical reality, but rather an emotional state of mind.

A significant body of scholarship has analyzed and recognized the cultural significance of the mirror as a moral trope in ancient China (e.g.: Chen 2004; Kong and Liu 1984; Powers 1991).

As Marston Anderson observes in his book on *The Limits of Realism: Chinese Fiction in the Revolutionary Period* (1990), the mirror metaphor in Chinese writings “is never equated with ... a reflection of the Real, but with the mind of the [subject], who through contemplation rids himself (or herself) of a clouded subjectivity” (15). In this regard, the “Chinese use of the mirror describes a mental state ... [where] the subject’s response to the mirror is not exclusively intellectual but encompasses emotional identification as well” (Anderson 1990, 15). Political and historical commentaries on ancient artifacts have also argued that the mirror trope in Chinese rhetoric represents the conflict arising from the juxtaposition of sex (i.e.: erotic desire) and violence (i.e.: death or suicide) (Wang 1994). This reading portends Xiaoyang’s attempted suicide later in the story, a desperate act prompted by the inability to reconcile his internal and external experiences. Hence, the cultural underpinnings of how Xiaoyang does not describe his outward appearance but rather articulates inner sentiments while looking at his mirror reflection underscores the variability of gender identity and subjectivity.

Unlike the child in Lacan’s mirror scene, Xiaoyang does not see an image that is ideal or complete but rather one that is at odds with his desired self-image to be heterosexual, shattering the illusion of his successful purging of homoerotic inclinations and reflecting back to his failure to become a “normal man” (6). Xiaoyang’s state of mind where he feels miserable because of his “mental weakness” reveals that he does not question whether he is actually sexually attracted to Huizi or if his desire is unnatural, indicating that on a subconscious level, he has already accepted his homosexual tendencies. Instead, the overt concern with his feelings being *judged* as “immoral” and “ridiculous” by Chinese society – psychically rendering him different and estranged – reflects the conflict between internal homoerotic desire and external heteronormative reality that directly impacts the configuration and suppression of Xiaoyang’s (homo)sexual identity (6). Clearly, growing up into an identity that is unmentionable in any positive or helpful

context has spawned persistent conflict that Xiaoyang confronts as he matures. The story is thus concerned with narrating his struggle to simultaneously articulate and expunge his homosexuality beyond the realm of signs, signifiers, and semiotics.

Xiaoyang's declaration of self-pride at being brave enough to choose to suppress his homosexual feelings problematizes Judith Butler's notion of a "compulsory order" that she first cited in *Gender Trouble* (1990), and expands upon in *Undoing Gender* (2004). Xiaoyang's fluctuating subjectivity exemplifies that "although being a certain gender does not imply that one will desire a certain way, there is nevertheless a desire that is constitutive of gender itself and, as a result, no quick or easy way to separate the life of gender from the life of desire" (Butler 2004a, 1-2). Despite his homoerotic desires and feminine subjectivity, Xiaoyang is compelled to conform to masculine expectations in heterosexual relations. He forces himself to "learn to date girls" in university, but these relationships inevitably "result in failure and farewell" (8). Instead of enabling Xiaoyang to orchestrate a "seemingly 'normal' life," multiple heterosexual relationships only exacerbate his *tongzhi* self-abjection (8). He repeatedly expresses paranoia about various "girlfriends" being able to "astutely uncover" his "vulgar inner self," where "if [he] were to continue dating her, the secret in [his] heart would no doubt be exposed" (8).

At this juncture, Xiaoyang's relationships reveal what Kristeva refers to as "fear of women – fear of procreation" where "fear of the archaic mother turns out to be essentially fear of her generative power" (1982, 77). When women complain about him being the type of man "who makes a good friend but not a good husband," Xiaoyang is horrified that they are "able to recognize that he is a useless man" – someone who is "good on the outside but useless inside" (8). These statements support the general principle of a patriarchal fear of the feminine body, but suggest that the origin of Xiaoyang's homosexual self-denial and abjection is not merely fear of the castrated archaic mother that Kristeva describes, where "abjection (of the mother) leads me

toward respect for the body of the other, my fellow man, my brother” (1982, 79). Instead, it is fear of the *castrating* mother and woman, one that emasculates Xiaoyang as “a useless man” (8). The paradox here is that the very thing that promises Xiaoyang a “normal” heterosexual life – relationships with women – calls attention to his lack of masculine traits, signifying the very opposite of male heteronormality in patriarchal Chinese society.

In between his botched opposite-sex relationships, Xiaoyang feels “like a lonely soul and wild ghost,” driving him to meet anonymous men in public toilets for gay sex (8). Prior to graduating from university, however, he pronounces to have “finally learned his lesson and realized [he] should not have made the mistake of trying to get a girlfriend, but should just straightforwardly get a wife” (8). Xiaoyang’s distressed vacillation between forcibly immersing himself in opposite-sex affairs yet succumbing to same-sex sexual temptation evinces the tension Butler cites concerning the fluidity of gender and sexuality. Xiaoyang’s fluctuation from one sexual partner to another across heterosexual/homosexual and female/male relations differentiates the categories of sex, gender, and sexual orientation while simultaneously assimilating them. Although Xiaoyang eventually falls back onto the “compulsory order of sex/gender/desire,” his tone towards heterosexual relationships is perfunctory and emotionless. He ruminates on a friend’s “marriage balancing scale philosophy” to guide his own search for a wife, where finding “successful ‘love’ (the type that will lead to marriage)” depends solely “on the consideration of two factors”: socio-economic position and education (8). Xiaoyang is advised to find a woman who will have the right “weights” of “education and family background ... to balance the scale” for a “90% marriage success rate” (8). For Xiaoyang, heterosexual consummation is understood as a mathematical problem, where individual qualities are likened to weights on a scale, exposing the constructed nature of heterosexual marriage.

[Less than Jubilant Identifications: Philosophical Sadness and Ruptured Consummation]

When Xiaoyang graduates, he refuses to return to Beijing, believing that if he “stayed in Beijing, something between Huizi and [him] would happen before long” and Xiaoyang “didn’t want to become the third party, troubling Huizi and Xiaowei’s feelings” (8). Instead, Xiaoyang decides to “let Huizi believe they are ‘different’ ... so that [his] image will always be preserved as ‘pure [and] beautiful’ in Huizi’s heart” (8). At Xiaoyang’s wedding, Huizi bestows the newlywed couple with lavish gifts, including “two rings made of pure gold” (8). After several years, Xiaoyang receives a letter from his parents about Huizi being sent back to re-education labor camp for “hooligan behavior” (i.e., homosexual relations) and immediately returns to Beijing.

At the camp, Xiaoyang is confronted with the sight of a “scarily thin” Huizi with his “hair completely shaven [and] dark, sunken eyes” (9). Xiaoyang narrates his shock and grief:

I felt an uncontrollable agitation; facing the person I loved, facing his languished silhouette, I could not simply feign indifference. From his emaciated face, cold gaze, and tightly pursed lips, I could see Huizi’s pain, and that pain made me tremble. Not wanting him to see the tears in my eyes, I immediately lowered my head. ... After I stabilized my emotions [and] lifted my head, Huizi was actually smiling, but his smile still revealed bitterness (9).

Seeing Huizi’s smile, Xiaoyang is “unable to not smile back” when he realizes that “it is almost as if the person sitting in prison was not Huizi, but [himself]” (9). Nevertheless, Xiaoyang is horrified when he notices “deep cuts with bloodstains on [Huizi’s] wrists” (9). Huizi explains that they are handcuff wounds from the way his “captors ... bullied him for being a rabbit” (9). Xiaoyang pleads Huizi to promise that “no matter what, [he has] to peaceably tolerate the next two years” in prison to be released on time (9). Huizi cheerfully reassures Xiaoyang that he will, and asks Xiaoyang to “help [him] check up on Xiaowei” (9). After leaving the detention camp, Xiaowei goes to a nearby restaurant and drinks beers until he “violently vomit[s] without end” (9).

Xiaoyang's experience at the labor detention site invokes Lacan's theories about the intersection of desire, fantasy, and disgust, forming an image of the abjected homosexual body. In Lacanian parlance, human sexuality works on the level of fantasy construction, where "love is ... one's own ego that one loves in love, one's own ego made real on the imaginary level" (1954a, 142). Lacan suggests that human desire and sexuality is so caught up in idealized images of sexual partners that it is ultimately narcissistic, and thus, when a lover is confronted with the object of his desire in its imperfect bodily materiality, love can easily turn into disgust (Lacan 1954a). Xiaoyang is antagonized by Huizi's destitute state; he is unable to face the fact that his object of desire and identification has malformed into an abject body. At this point, the mirroring between the two boys – a process that has enabled Xiaoyang to construct his sense of self-identity on the basis of identification with Huizi – is irrevocably ruptured by the interjection of abjection.

The spectacle of Huizi's wasted body, particularly the sight of bloody wrist wounds, challenges the limits of the physical body, causing Xiaoyang to feel intense grief and revulsion. Xiaoyang sees his homosexual identity reflected back to himself through the figure of Huizi, but this reflective relationship is shattered when Xiaoyang is confronted with Huizi's abject body, forcing him to recognize the estrangement between them. Upon leaving Huizi, Xiaoyang is compelled to retch: he "violently vomit[s] without end" in a dire attempt to expel abjection from his own being, in a process that also serves to establish his selfhood as one distinct from Huizi.

As Kristeva argues:

I expel *myself*, I spit *myself out*, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish *myself*. That detail ... turns me inside out, guts sprawling; it is thus that *they* see that "I" am in the process of becoming an other at the expense of my own death. During that course in which "I" become, I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit (1982, 3, emphasis in original).

The figure of a restrained, deprived Huizi amalgamates an abject body and object of desire; Xiaoyang's response to his encounter with Huizi displays the traumatic experience of being confronted with a materiality that signifies his own homosocial death and "show[s] [him] what [he] permanently thrust[s] aside in order to live" a heteronormative life (Kristeva 1982, 3). Nonetheless, Xiaoyang's final act in the story is to ensure the man he loves is taken care of in prison: he persuades Huizi's sister to accept her brother's homosexuality and reunites Xiaowei with Huizi. Xiaoyang seals his own lonely fate, accepting his role as a bereaved lover, repressing his homoerotic desires and affirming the priority of his own heterosexual union.

Several months after Xiaoyang returns home, he "sits under the table lamp, playing with the golden ring Huizi had given [him]" after his wife and son have gone to bed. He "looks at the character for 'fortune' (福 *fu*) engraved on the ring" and ponders how "blessings, good luck, [and] good fortune were all that Huizi gave him" (10). Before long, Xiaoyang's wife comes up behind him and disrupts his reverie, where she "pulls [him] out of the chair ... [and] prepares for indecent behavior [with him]" (10). After having sex – what Xiaoyang alludes to as his wife's "violence" – the couple lie in bed and Xiaoyang tells his wife that if "for men, friends are like limbs, and wives are like clothes," it is possible to live "without limbs, but not without clothes" (10). As such, it is evident that Xiaoyang falls back onto the "compulsory order" of heteronormative behavior through heterosexual marriage. However, Xiaoyang's relationship with his wife is dispassionate; this dystopic scenario manifests Kristeva's argument that homoerotic "desire (*Lust*), thus normalized in order to escape abject concupiscence (*Begierde*) [through marriage] ... sinks into a banality that is sadness and silence" (Kristeva 1982, 28). The story ends with the portrayal of Xiaoyang "unable to resist looking back at the ring ... with 'fortune' shining under the table light" and remarking that "it was as if its golden yellow blessings reflected through the whole house" (10).

Heather Love's book, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (2007), provides perspective on "Huizi" as a Comrade story illustrating how *tongzhi* "dreams for the future are founded on a history of suffering, stigma, and violence" (1). Xiaoyang's act of clinging to the past by pondering Huizi as an external image of abjection exhibits what Love defines as "a politics forged in the image of exile, of refusal, even of failure" (Love 2007, 71). This process reflects on *tongzhi* history marked by loss to envision a more progressive future. In "Huizi," homosexual identity is indelibly marked by the effects of backward discourse: on the one hand, *tongzhi* continue to signify a history of damaged or compromised subjectivity; on the other, *tongzhi* experience is produced in response to that same history of suffering and violence. According to Love, "pride and visibility, in queer theory, offer antidotes to shame and the legacy of the closet; they are made in the image of specific forms of denigration. Queerness is structured by this central turn; it is both abject and exalted; a mixture of desire and denigration" (2007, 2-3).

The socially condemned titular figure of "Huizi" is one such "image of ... denigration" that is "both abject and exalted; a mixture of desire and denigration" in this Comrade tale (Love 2007, 2-3). The conflict *tongzhi* face is "lived out on the level of individual subjectivity" through Xiaoyang's narrative, where "homosexuality is experienced as a stigmatizing mark as well as a form of romantic exceptionalism" (Love 2007, 3). By looking back at the ring, Xiaoyang turns backward to look at the destruction of Huizi, the product of a "hooligan" backwardness created by what Love terms the "backward feelings" of "shame, depression, [and] regret" in a repressive patriarchal hegemony (4). In the midst of Xiaoyang's reflections on stigma, ignominy, and futile heterosexual relations, his same-sex friendship with Huizi remains a kind of sacred space, a consistently idealized model of *tongzhi* relations. The adolescent boys' friendship is rendered a site where "being with a friend is an end in itself" and same-sex intimacies are explored "free

from tremors of eroticism and from eros's relentless narrative logic of pursuit, consummation, and exhaustion" (Love 2007, 78).

Throughout "Huizi," Xiaoyang negotiates an internal struggle between his homosocial feelings for Huizi and the pressure to conform to heteronormativity. Despite repeated mirroring behaviors and numerous points of identification, Xiaoyang realizes that the fantasies he projects onto Huizi are impossible prospects when he is physically and psychologically confronted with the materiality of Huizi's abject body. Xiaoyang eventually acknowledges that their relationship will never achieve a level of satisfying consummation, and his love for Huizi remains only in the realm of *tongzhi* desires and dreams. However, it is important to note that Xiaoyang's longing is for a structure of feeling he never fully experienced.³⁹

The golden ring forges a transition between inner and outer realities for Xiaoyang, connecting his inner world of imagined homoerotic fantasy with an outer world of experienced heteronormative reality. Xiaoyang is thus psychically and physically detached from Huizi, yet remains symbolically connected to him. The ring, as the most recognized symbol for everlasting love, also represents how the lack of fulfilling consummation ironically ensures homosocial desire persists through the reflections and refractions of "golden yellow blessings" (10). It signifies how, for *tongzhi* in contemporary China, homoerotic desire is largely articulated through fantasy, and as such, its enduring passion is driven to some extent by its own impossibility. Although Xiaoyang's decides to live as a straight man in his adult life, the story indicates that his choice to suppress his homosexuality is only superficial at best.

³⁹ Perhaps here the golden ring can be interpreted as what psychologist Donald Winnicott, building upon Lacan's mirror stage model, has termed a "transitional object." In a seminal article, Winnicott conceptualized transitional objects to describe those items that young children develop strong attachments to (e.g.: blankets or soft toys), and theorized how those affections demonstrate ego development and contribute to a sense of self (1971). Later psychologists have also expanded upon the role of transitional objects in the separation-individualization, a process where an individual's sense of self evolves as separate from others around them (Litt 1986).

[*Tongzhi Reflections: Queer Desire, Identity, and Friendship*]

“Huizi” is a story that dwells on what Love refers to as the “dark side” of modern queer representation (2007, 5). It is a somber, ambivalent text perceptibly marked by *tongzhi* suffering – both physical and psychological – that registers the narrator’s painful negotiation of his homosexual coming-of-age and coming-out in modern China. “Huizi” portrays two *tongzhi* adolescent boys as they mature and enter a repressive society that rejects all non-normative behaviors, constituting a critical account of the corporeal and psychic costs of contemporary Chinese homophobia. It is a story where the experience of social exclusion and historical “impossibility” of same-sex desire is deeply rooted in feelings such as nostalgia, withdrawal, and loneliness. The narrative trajectory of “Huizi” reveals how the lingering effects of abjection underscores the gap between homosocial aspirations and heteronormative actuality.

As a Comrade *bildungsroman*, “Huizi” portrays how friendship shapes the divergent *tongzhi* identities of two adolescent boys as they grapple with loss, self-understanding, and communion in a heteronormative world at once narrow-minded and hypocritical. Failed intimacies in “Huizi” tempt readers to fantasize happier endings for the characters who lead recognizably *tongzhi* trajectories for their disillusioned lives. Although characterized by broken relationships, the Comrade text suggests a turn to friendship to rethink intimacy beyond the heterosexual couple and nuclear family. Same-sex friendship is significant in queer studies as a highly idealized relationship perceived to be as much a solvent of human relations as it is a form of sociability. In this view, rather than reading Xiaoyang and Huizi’s friendship as a frustrated gay romance, it is possible to interpret their relationship at face value, as an alternate mode of intimacy.

The fractured temporality signified by the end of Xiaoyang and Huizi’s friendship address issues of duration and succession for the Chinese homosexual community, weighing

the odds of sustaining an “impossible” mode of desire to explore the possibility of *tongzhi* historical continuity. As Slavoj Žižek, in his reading of Lacan, tellingly remarks, “*through fantasy, we learn how to desire*” (1989, 6). In constructing a fantasy-version of reality, *tongzhi* texts such as “Huizi” establish coordinates for homoerotic desire: Xiaoyang’s narrative situates him and his object of desire (Huizi), as well as the relationship between them, in a contemporary Chinese context. “Huizi” reveals that *tongzhi* desires necessarily rely on lack, since fantasy, by definition, does not correspond to anything in the real world. Nonetheless, contemporary Comrade readers attend to longings for futurity in these stories as a way to learn about the *tongzhi* experience and its possibilities. Ultimately, “Huizi” is a poignant *bildungsroman* of adolescent homosocial romance and desire, but also a tale of heartlessness that problematizes the continuing denigration of *tongzhi* existence in modern China. In this way, Comrade coming-of-age narratives present the often submerged or half-articulate desires of Chinese homosexuals grappling with their sexuality and self-identity; these works enable readers to transcend abjection of the homosexual body consigned to the margins of society, expanding the future horizon of coming-out to *tongzhi* potentiality.

CHAPTER THREE

[The Camaraderie Between Soldiers: Homosocial Homoerotics in Military Tongzhi Fiction]

Billy Bragg's song, "Tender Comrade" (1988), limns a sentimental view of an affectionate soldier seeking compassion and consolation in the arms of another comrade during World War II (Lehring 2003). The song plaintively questions what a "tender comrade" will tell others about his relationships with other soldiers:

Will you say that we were heroes
Or that fear of dying among strangers
Tore our innocence and false shame away?
And from that moment on deep in my heart I knew
That I would only give my life for love

Brothers in arms in each other arms
Was the only time that I was not afraid
What will you do when the war is over, tender comrade?
When we cast off these khaki clothes
And go our separate ways
What will you say of the bond we had, tender comrade (Bragg 1988)?

These lyrics describe an institutionally produced intimacy amongst soldiers that negates the death and depression of war and military life. "Tender Comrade" emanates a heartfelt pathos that underscores implicit homoeroticism and resonates with elements of suffering, weakness, and affection. The tune reveals a time when the compassion and physical love between two men in the face of death in combat was romanticized, rather than marginalized.

Billy Bragg's song depicts the ambiguity of homosocial affective relations inherent in the camaraderie between soldiers. The imagery suggests a fluid boundary between the sexual and nonsexual dimensions of male same-sex intimacy that antedates the influence of gay activism and the making of a discrete homosexual identity (Lehring 2003). While specifically situated in a Western context, "Tender Comrade" evinces a thematic universality about the nature of intimate male-male bonding. In particular, the song speaks to Foucault's broader vision of homoerotic

friendship and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's notion of a homosocial⁴⁰ and homosexual continuum in affective same-sex relationships.

Along these lines, Military Comrade Stories (军事同志小说 *junshi tongzhi xiaoshuo*), a sub-genre of online Comrade Literature, addresses the ambiguous sphere of homosociality in the Chinese military experience. This category of stories feature *tongzhi* as men serving in China's national army, playing with the dual identification of *tongzhi* associated with both military comrades and gay comrades. Although military service is central to the construction of most States, where serving in the armed forces is often considered a defining characteristic of patriotic citizenship, it is often also where homosexuality is most clearly codified and scrutinized. Thus, *tongzhi* characters in military Comrade stories are men torn between their national duty, idea of self and family, and sexuality. They symbolically represent patriotic men upholding Communist ideals and stereotypes of heterosexual masculinity in the army. At the same time, however, the social bonds between these men gesture at homoerotic intimacy, controverting preconceived notions of homosexuality. Therefore, military Comrade stories portray the continuum of homosocial and homosexual relations when *tongzhi* characters renegotiate the presumed links between masculinity and militarism, sexuality and State.

This chapter considers the ramifications that occur when homosexual characters uproot the Chinese heteronormative power paradigm when they serve in the military. A close analysis of “Commitment” 《承诺》 (2008) by Qing Feng (青风), with a focus on the shifting relationship between He Shuai and Weijun, presents an interesting perspective on the nexus of homosocial friendship and homosexual desire in the Chinese context. “Commitment” subversively repositions homosexual characters traditionally oppressed by China's Communist

⁴⁰ Sedgwick defines “homosocial” as a word that “describes social bonds between persons of the same sex; it is neologism, obviously formed by analogy with ‘homosexual,’ and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from ‘homosexual’” (1985:1). She describes male “homosocial desire” in relation to an unbroken continuum between male homosocial and homosexual relations.

regime within the figure of the military comrade who is closely associated with that persecuting authority. This chapter posits that the modern understanding of *tongzhi* signifies the ideological formation of Communist comradeship and homosocialist bonding, exposing homoerotic tensions at the core of China's socialist ideology.

[Military Comrades: Cultural and Political Identity of Tongzhi in the Chinese Army]

As a sub-genre of Comrade Literature, military *tongzhi* fiction stands out as a category of stories that are directly concerned with the ramifications of social control in Chinese society. The label *tongzhi* has a long history originating in the early Qin Dynasty (221 BC - 206 BC), where it was originally used to refer to people with the same ethics and ideals (Fang and Heng 1983). As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the term “Comrade” (同志 *tongzhi*) literally translates as “same will” or “of the same intent.” The political dimension of *tongzhi* is commonly associated with Sun Yat-Sen's famous quote, “the revolution has not yet succeeded; comrades we must struggle still” (Chou 2000). During the Communist Revolution (1921-1949), the Chinese Communist Party appropriated *tongzhi* as an honorific address term reserved for Chinese Communist Party revolutionaries who shared the same goal to overthrow the Nationalist government and establish Communism. Being addressed as *tongzhi* during this time required the addressee's Party membership or demonstration of commitment to the Communist Revolution, often symbolizing recruitment into the Revolutionary Army (Wong and Zhang 2001).

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Party promoted the use of *tongzhi* as a new address term to replace previous referents to an individual's social status and class.⁴¹ As part of the Party's strategy to establish an egalitarian system, the use of *tongzhi* was

⁴¹ For example, common address terms *tongzhi* was intended to replace include: “Miss” (小姐 *xiaojie*), an unmarried woman of a privileged class or intelligentsia; “Mister” (先生 *xiansheng*), a man of the privileged class or

extended from soldiers in the Revolutionary Army to the general public as a generic and politically correct term to address everyone in China regardless of social class or gender (Tsai 1988). This popularized use of *tongzhi* over the past few decades has made this address term a political symbol loaded with Communist ideological connotations. Interestingly, it has now been reappropriated as the most popular word used to refer to Chinese homosexuals, especially gay men (Wong 2008).⁴² By taking the most sacred title from China's mainstream Communist ideology, *tongzhi* establish a sexual identity while also reclaiming a distinctively Chinese familial-cultural history (Chou 2001). The term invokes the voice of Chinese revolutionaries striving to establish a new government, uniting *tongzhi* members and activists on the basis of shared beliefs and goals – to advocate for the equality of homosexuals in China.

Given the discursive history of *tongzhi* and how the term's meaning has changed over time, it is unsurprising that *tongzhi* writers would take advantage of a polymorphic *tongzhi* character in military Comrade fiction. This stylized use of *tongzhi* creates polysemic texts that undermine dominant political, social, and sexual discourses in modern China. Along the lines of this reading, military Comrade stories reveal how Mainland China's emergent *tongzhi* discourse integrates the sexual into the social, political, and cultural. In Chinese communist scholarship, the People's Liberation Army, also known as the Chinese Red Army (红军 *hongjun*), is consistently endorsed as an ideal model to be emulated for the nation's social and economic development (Gittings 1964; Fisher 2010). The critical development prompting this dogma is the nation-wide campaign to "Learn from the Experience of the People's Liberation Army in Political and Ideological Work" launched by an editorial on the *People's Daily* in 1964 (Gittings

intelligentsia; "Auntie" (阿姨 *ayi*), an older woman; "Master" (老爷 *laoye*), head of the family of a privileged class. For more information see Wong 2008.

⁴² In 1989, *tongzhi* was first used in the Chinese title of the inaugural Hong Kong Gay and Lesbian Film Festival (香港第一界同志电影节 *xianggang diyi jie tongzhi dianying jie*) as a term for same-sex desire. After the festival, *tongzhi* was widely adopted by gay and lesbian organizations in Hong Kong and was then exported to Taiwan, Mainland China, and diasporic Chinese communities (Zhou 1997).

1964).⁴³ Aside from ardently commending the military's techniques and policies, the government's public rhetoric also endowed the army with numerous other virtues that were worthy of emulation. These accolades ranged from patriotism and a supreme revolutionary spirit, to honesty, discipline, courage, and admirable self-conduct (Gittings 1964). In other words, Comrades in the armed services were valorized as ideal men. Ultimately, the objective of this campaign to learn from the PLA was to fortify the Party's active leadership role controlling China's economic and social development.⁴⁴ To this day, the Chinese national army still remains the symbol of Party control, strength, and political loyalty (Fisher 2010).

Against this backdrop of the PLA's political and historical significance, the writing of homosexual relations into the Chinese military and mainstream Communist ideology indeed borrows from the armed forces to do "political and ideological work" (Powell 1965, 130). Military Comrade stories thus harbor potential to simultaneously undermine repressive sociopolitical and sexual discourses by framing issues of male same-sex relations from a multi-layered perspective. "Commitment" is one such novella that presents the continuum of homosocial and homosexual behaviors through a *tongzhi* character that blurs the boundaries between military comrade and gay man.

In the first volume, the story recounts the experiences of He Shuai, the son of a wealthy and well-connected family, after he joins the army. Upon turning 18 in 1983, He Shuai announces to his parents that he has decided not to take the college entrance exams, but instead will volunteer for military service despite an ongoing war at the time. As a new recruit, He

⁴³ This campaign initiated an emulation movement that established the People's Liberation Army (PLA) as a model for the whole nation to "learn from, study, and compare with" (NCNA 1964, qtd. from Gittings 1964). All sections of society, from commercial industries, government departments, and rural work cadres, were called upon to study the "advanced" political and ideological work of the armed forces. This campaign lasted several months and reached fanatic intensity, where there was an exceptional amount of news about the PLA's political achievements and of its model soldiers or companies (Powell 1965).

⁴⁴ This ideological rationale is articulated in an article printed in *Red Flag*, the Party journal, stating that the emulation campaign was initiated to ensure that the armed forces remained "under the absolute leadership of the Party [as] a responsive and obedient tool..." ("Political Work" 1964, qtd. in Powell 1965, 130).

Shuai is detested by the other soldiers because of his arrogant and spoiled behavior. He is assigned a derogatory post to take care of the pig pen until his mother visits him and gets him transferred to Squad Two, one of the National Army's "model units" (4). He meets his Sergeant and Squad Leader, Lu Weijun, and the unit's 10 other soldiers. After training for several months, He Shuai achieves some acceptance amongst the other soldiers, but the squad is sent to China's contested border region with Vietnam, rife with sporadic conflicts. At the front lines, the group fosters an intimate community of mutual support as they face war's violence and death, doing their best to help each other through the ordeal. Near the end of the war, He Shuai is accidentally left behind after spraining his ankle and Weijun turns back to look for him. The two men struggle to get out of a forest in enemy territory, dealing with heavy storms and the need to find water and food to sustain themselves. They each in turn get wounded or sick and must be tenderly ministered to by the other. After staying overnight in an abandoned hut to shelter from the rain, they are ambushed by Vietnamese soldiers. He Shuai is injured in their attack, and Weijun swears to risk his life to ensure He Shuai is taken back to safety. He Shuai's next memory is of waking up in a hospital bed, and his mother tells him that Weijun had passed away during battle. He Shuai believes that Weijun had sacrificed his life to save him, and swears to live a socially respectable life by attending university, succeeding in his career, and getting married, promising to name his children after Weijun to honor him.

The second volume fasts forward 11 years, where He Shuai is wealthy and married, but has sustained a permanent limp from the war and is haunted by dreams of Weijun. His wife, Zhou Lili, is seeking a divorce to leave him for another man. One day, He Shuai is shocked to see Weijun at a bar in "S city." He Shuai learns that Weijun had survived and tried to look for him after the war, but He Shuai had been out of the country and the two men did not cross paths again until that day. For the past few years, Weijun had been fighting in illegal boxing

competitions to earn money. After spending some time together, the two men confess and acknowledge their gay love for each other as a culmination of their brotherly camaraderie from shared military experiences. He Shuai, upon news that his father is in poor health, decides to move back to Beijing to take care of his parents. He Shuai also convinces Weijun to quit fighting and move back to Beijing with him to start their new life together. After several melodramatic plot turns, in which multiple characters proclaim their straight or gay love for either He Shuai or Weijun causing misunderstandings that almost sever the couple, the two men finally end up together. The story ends on a lighthearted note where He Shuai and Weijun publicly declare their “marriage” during an outing at Tiananmen Square in Beijing.

At first glance, “Commitment” does not appear to be a story about homosexuality at all, but rather a sociopolitical critique of China’s turbulent Communist history over the past few decades. The setting during the Sino-Vietnamese border skirmishes of 1979 up until the 1990s fought by the Chinese People’s Liberation Army also invites this analysis (Chen 1987). This time frame coincides with the initiation of Deng Xiaoping’s opening up reforms, ushering in a period of rapid socioeconomic development and instability vis-à-vis government power (Brandt and Rawski 2008).⁴⁵ Given this context, it is unsurprising that descriptions of the army experience in “Commitment” are brimming with references to symbols and slogans of the Communist Party.

The story is drenched in red imagery: fresh red blood, blooming red flowers, and blushing or angered red faces. Two main characters have the word “red” (红 *hong*) in their names as well – Wang Shaohong (王少红) and Jianhong (建红). This imagery invokes references to red as the color of the Communist Party, and specifically the *Little Red Book* (小红

⁴⁵ The Chinese economic reforms (改革开放 *gaige kaifang*; literally "Reform and Opening up") refers to the program of economic reforms named "Socialism with Chinese characteristics" reformists in the Chinese Communist Party led by Deng Xiaoping initiated in December 1978. The reforms led to a period of rapid economic growth which dramatically impacted social inequity and income disparities within the nation (Brant and Rawski 2008).

书 *xiaohongshu* or 红宝书 *hongbaoshu*) of Chairman Mao quotations that formed the bedrock of the Cultural Revolution. The names of several characters in the novel are also borrowed from real-life Party officials; in particular, Li Feiyue (李飞跃)⁴⁶ and Li Gang (李刚)⁴⁷ are both well-known Comrades presently working as government officials for the Chinese Communist Party. This direct reference to Party officials caricatures their personas to criticize the homo-socialist Communist government system, especially when all the soldiers in the novel turn out to be gay.

Aside from soldier names that parody actual Party officials, others echo the Communist practice of name-changing (改名风 *gaimingfeng*) to make individual names sound more revolutionary (Lu 2003). For example, the characters Lu Weijun (陆卫军) and Luo Weiguo (罗卫国) have fictional names that respectively mean “protect the army” and “protect the country,” reaffirming Communist discourse propagated during the Cultural Revolution that emphasized patriotism and a revolutionary spirit. In general, the sustained use of names and themes associated with the Communist regime makes reference to and criticizes the fact that many key Party leaders have extensive military backgrounds, influencing their ideological convictions (Powell 1965).⁴⁸

Despite the explicit references to politics and class struggle symptomatic of China’s rapidly changing social environment, “Commitment” presents more than a critique of the

⁴⁶ Comrade Li Feiyue (李飞跃同志) started working for the Communist Party in 1985 and is the Committee Secretary of Guizhou Province for the Miao and Dong autonomous regions (贵州省黔东南苗族侗族自治州委书记).

⁴⁷ Comrade Li Gang (李刚同志) is the deputy director of the police department in the northern district of Baoding city, Hebei province. His name is infamously associated with the “My Father is Li Gang!” (我爸是李刚!) incident, where Li Qiming, Li Gang’s son, knocked down two girls and killed one of them when driving on school grounds in Hebei University. Instead of showing any sign of remorse, Li Qiming yelled at the security guards and the angry crowd, challenging them to sue him because his “father is Li Gang.” The phrase became one of the most popular catchphrases amongst Chinese netizens to criticize the arrogance of children of government officials. The incident also exposes the extent of corruption within the government system itself, where people associated with the Communist Party expect to be above the law. Li Gang has since been named one of the “Four Big Name Dads” (四大名爹) amongst locals to refer to well-known cases of government corruption or excess.

⁴⁸ Many leaders in the Chinese Communist Party have served as military commanders or as commissars.

Communist regime – it also specifically focuses on how relations between men are bound up in patriarchal institutions. The novella conveys the continuum of male homosocial bonding as it intersects with male friendship, filial piety, class distinctions, national duty, and homoerotic desire. In Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s study on *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985), she argues that the act of “draw[ing] the ‘homosocial’ back into the orbit of ‘desire,’ of the potentially erotic, ... is to hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual – a continuum whose visibility, for men, in our society, is radically disrupted” (1-2). In the Chinese context, military Comrade fiction reflects this continuum of male homosocial and homosexual relations. Indeed, the military gay *tongzhi* identity internalizes and deploys this tension from within the national army to critique China’s larger framework of State power.

In “Commitment,” the portrayal of one of the most important establishments of Chinese national culture – the People’s Liberation Army – is done in an admixture of a preoccupation with institutional discipline and fascination with the situational homosocial desire that accompanies the world of men and militarism. When He Shuai enters the army as a new recruit, he is immediately immersed in a strict disciplinary environment where “nobody cares where you come from, if you are the brother of a prince, or whatever power your parents may have, [because] here, [they were] all soldiers. This was a military troop, not a place to fool around” (3). Initially, He Shuai rebels against these strict disciplinary practices and is penalized by being consigned to serve as the pig pen caretaker. Later, when he joins Squad Two, Sergeant Lu Weijun warns him that “people cannot live like pigs” and that members in Squad Two “are wolves, and do not welcome pigs” (4). Nonetheless, it is because of these protocols and the desire to “not be a pig” that He Shuai is compelled to “work harder than ever before,” enabling him to establish good relations with fellow soldiers (14). This sense of camaraderie amongst

Squad Two soldiers is what eventually fosters strong homosocial bonds that blur the boundary between homosexual and heterosexual relations, particularly when the novella portrays an almost seamless progression from military *tongzhi* to gay *tongzhi* with an emphasis on male same-sex friendship.

In the midst of the stigma and shame associated with male homosexuality, intimate friendship between men has remained a consistently idealized model of same-sex relations. In his 1981 interview for the French magazine *Gai Pied*, Foucault offers a specific site for homosexuality's development when he elaborates on the value of friendship for the gay community's political and ideological future. "Friendship as a Way of Life" posits that "homosexuality is not a form of desire but something desirable" where "the development toward which the problem of homosexuality tends is the one of friendship" (Foucault 1981, 135-6). Foucault describes queer male same-sex relations as one that is "still formless" in which partners "have to invent, from A to Z, ... the sum of everything through which they can give each other pleasure" (137). In this way, Foucault cultivates friendship as a mode of homosexual existence, opening the philosophical canon of friendship to new and troubling avenues of desire and social refusal.

When drawing upon the military to elucidate his argument about homosexual intimacy posing a challenge to general social norms, Foucault states that "[t]he institution is caught in a contradiction" because "affective intensities traverse it which at one and the same time keep it going and shake it up" (1981, 137). The army epitomizes this contradiction when "love between men is ceaselessly provoked [*appelle*] and shamed" and "institutional codes can't validate these relations" (137). Instead, these male same-sex relations "with multiple intensities, variable colors, imperceptible movements, and changing forms ... short-circuit [institutional codes] and introduce love where there's supposed to be only law, rule, or habit" (137). Foucault's

reflections on homosexual friendship gesture toward an enhanced recognition of what can be troubling in male-male companionship, and suggest how institutional structures such as the military facilitate those intimate relations. Rather than short-circuiting institutional codes, the male bonding depicted in “Commitment” simultaneously rehearses and inverts the tension between homoerotic desire and hegemonic power. After all, homosocialism is crucial to create the lines of desire and affective relations that undergird and activate the State’s ideological power, contributing to the formation of (sexual) subjects. In this view, military Comrade fiction problematize the figure of a gay Chinese soldier, juxtaposing homosocial(ist) camaraderie with homosexual intimacy to renegotiate preconceived notions of male *tongzhi* relations.

The portrayal of a soldier’s duty to both his family and nation manifests conflicting ideas about what kinds of behavior should define masculinity and an ideal man in contemporary Chinese society. Images of the family and themes of filial piety preside over the view of same-sex relations presented in “Commitment,” especially as issues of national identity, gender, and class intersect through male homosocial narratives. Throughout the novella, He Shuai and other main characters talk about their families or responsibilities as filial sons, both in terms of their duty to national service as well as in marriage and raising a family after the war. It is clear from the start that all the men come from different class statuses and it is only the army that brings them together, facilitating interactions that would not have happened outside the institution.

Despite these differences, the soldiers in Squad Two all share an ambition to be filial sons throughout their military service.⁴⁹ Filial piety is mentioned at several points in the story, where characters such as Lu Weijun and Liu Dazhou state that their “biggest aspiration after the war” is

⁴⁹ As discussed in earlier chapters, the virtue of filial piety in a patriarchal family structure creates significant hardships for Chinese homosexuals. In Confucian philosophy, filial piety (孝 *xiào*) is considered the first virtue in Chinese culture. Major components of filial piety include an emphasis on children taking care of and respecting their parents as well as producing a male heir to carry on the family name. Consequently, many *tongzhi* go to great extents to keep their homosexual identity concealed and often force themselves into heterosexual marriages to superficially fulfill these filial duties.

to “get married,” “have a son,” and be “a good man” (12; 17). However, He Shuai’s relationship with his mother throughout “Commitment” upends the expected relationships concerning preconceived notions of masculinity, national identity, and filiality, contesting heteronormative conventions of the family.

Although He Shuai frames his decision to military service in filial terms of “protecting his family [and] country” and “serving his duty” as a good son and citizen, the discordant mother-son relations resulting from such behavior contradicts traditional ideals of filiality (1). When He Shuai announces that he wants to join the army, he does so in rebellion against his mother’s wishes: Zhao Yunfang adamantly “warns” him that “if [he] tries to sneak past [her] to volunteer at the army, [he] no longer should consider [her as] mother” (1). This recurring image of the family connotes parallels to the family model for State organization in socialist ideology and traditional Confucian philosophy central to Chinese culture and politics.⁵⁰ The conflict between national duty, which is promoted by the government as an act epitomizing filial piety, and ruptured parent-child family relations criticizes the State’s contradictory rhetoric in China during the 1980s. In a letter to his parents before being dispatched to the frontlines, He Shuai dramatizes this tension when articulating his decision to reject his parent’s attempts to pull him out of the army. He Shuai writes that he “knows ... that he has repeatedly shamed [his parents] as their son” in going against their wishes and “causing them worry,” but emphasizes that he is “desperately training” to “sacrifice for his country ... for honor ... [and] to prove that [he] is not worthless” (7). As this letter reveals, it is an act of ostensible “bravery” and hyper-masculinity embodied by a soldier going to war that is portrayed as a son’s disrespectful, “unfilial,” and “disagreeable” behavior towards his parents (7).

⁵⁰ The family as a model for the organization of the State ties into the notion of filial piety where Confucius believed the child should be subordinate to the parent and elders, and subject to the sovereign who is to be regarded as the father of the nation. As such, the State as the family writ large was considered the most harmonious, orderly, and natural form of government.

In contrast, it is only in the second volume of “Commitment” that the narrative indicates He Shuai finally achieves the status of a filial son. This inflection point occurs after He Shuai and Weijun acknowledge their love for each other and have started making plans for their future together, including gay marriage. After He Shuai’s father passes away, he informs his mother of his plans to move back to Beijing and live together with Weijun so that he can better care for her: “He Shuai told her about his future plans, and the old woman was elated... Zhao Yunfang did not know what else to say, ... her heart felt comforted – comforted by her son’s filial piety” (36). Zhao Yunfang’s implicit acceptance of her gay son as filial demonstrates the elision of references to homosexuality in conflict with filial piety throughout the novella. This representation gestures at a range of homosocial and homosexual acts compatible with cultural traditions. Although framed in terms of filial piety and duty as a male Chinese citizen, involvement in the People’s Liberation Army is portrayed as behavior that clashes with cultural values. In contrast, *tongzhi* relations evolving from military Comrade experiences are indirectly endorsed as desirable for united families – and by extension, a compassionate and cohesive society.

[Comrades in Arms: Affective Gendered Relations in Military Camaraderie]

“Commitment” articulates the relationship between homosociality and homosexuality in forms that resist conventional discourses of masculinity and militarism. Indeed, the national army presented is populated by gay males, suggesting the ways in which the presumed links between masculinity, militarism, and heterosexuality should be reconfigured in contemporary society. The text reappropriates the patriotic soldier figure to signify homoerotic tensions inherent within the male camaraderie at the root of a successful national military. By queering the brotherly love between soldiers in Squad Two of the National Army across several decades,

“Commitment” portrays the homosocial nature inherent in all male same-sex relationships, rethinking the nature of homosexuality vis-à-vis intimate friendship and patriarchal institutions. The dynamic interaction between homosocial bonding and military asceticism in “Commitment,” rather than suppressing homosexuality, actually generates or reinforces queerness. Under strenuous conditions facing life and death, and the banality of life after facing death, the homosocial-cum-homosexual party in question is forced to recognize and create a new space in which same-sex relational desire can find acceptance.

Foucault’s notion of friendship as an alternative form of intimacy provides a useful interpretive lens to analyze how “Commitment” presents homosocial/sexual relations grounded in an image of reciprocity and care between men. These male bonds are essential in keeping soldiers on the battle lines as biopolitical subjects willing to fight and die for the State. Accordingly, the men in Squad Two help each other cope with the rigors of military life, the anxieties of battle, the depression of seeing other soldiers being injured or killed, and provide mutual moral support. In the trenches, they tell stories to keep each other’s minds off the rat infested and dirty environment around them (8; 9; 10). When He Shuai kills another man for the first time and feels sick with remorse, it is Jin Gui, another Comrade, who consoles him by telling him “not to think about it” and “not to be afraid” because they “are killing the enemy [in a self-defensive war” (9). They sing heartwarming songs to comfort each other when they start to get homesick, and tend to each other’s wounds when someone is injured (10; 12; 13). It is only through these close relationships that the men are able to make it through the war together, driving them to proclaim that “[they] will be brothers in this life and the next” and that “the ones who survive ... must continue to live for [their] brothers who have died no matter what” (7; 14). Within this context, the extent to which military comrades depend on homosocial relations for

survival reflects Foucault's notion of intimate same-sex bonding as "a desire, an uneasiness, a desire-in-uneasiness" that truly does become "a matter of existence" (1981, 136).⁵¹

Themes of gender fluidity and homoerotic desire traverse He Shuai and Weijun's relationship with the portrayal of gender performance as well as recurring references to gazing at the moon, illustrating a progression from military to gay *tongzhi* relations. In a story that appears to concern itself with war, power, and political commentary in recent Chinese history, the first prominent scene revealing gender ambiguity and homoerotic desire as thematic motifs occurs when the men play Catch Old K (捉老 K), a game where players draw cards to determine the "Elder Master" (老大) and the "Little Brother" (小弟). The first pairing is between Jin Gui and Wang Shaohong, where the latter is dared to "deliver a love confession to the girl in [his] heart" (12). Wang Shaohong expresses an "internal monologue" that leaves the others soldiers speechless:

There is someone in my heart. I don't know when it was I started liking him. But when I found out, the feeling was already anchored deep in my heart, unable to be pulled out. Seeing that person laugh, I am happy; seeing him sad, I am even

⁵¹ Foucault points out that in the military, and especially during war, "life between men not only was tolerated but rigorously necessary," where "honor, courage, not losing face, sacrifice, [and] leaving the trench with the captain" undoubtedly resulted in "very intense emotional tie[s]" (138). As Foucault further explains:

[M]en lived together completely, one on top of another, and for them it was nothing at all, insofar as death was present and finally the devotion to one another and the services rendered were sanctioned by the play of life and death. And apart from several remarks on camaraderie, the brotherhood of spirit, and some very partial observations, what do we know about these emotional uproars and storms of feeling that took place in those times? One can wonder how, in these absurd and grotesque wars and infernal massacres, the men managed to hold on in spite of everything (138).

Foucault argues that it is the "emotional uproars and storms of feeling" between men that "permitted this infernal life where for weeks guys floundered in the mud and shit, among corpses, starving for food, and were drunk the morning of the assault" (138). As an institutionalization of masculinity, the army fosters strong feelings of affection between soldiers that suggests homoerotic tensions. Numerous writings on war experiences are replete with descriptions revealing homosocial care amongst foot soldiers – the band of brothers – suffering together as the only constant that persists against the casual brutality of warfare and a technocratic pursuit of victory. This communal dynamic demonstrates Foucault's formulation of homosocial/sexual friendship as "a way of life [that] can be shared among individuals of different age, status, and social activity" (137). While Foucault recognizes the importance of male-male friendship for the perpetuation of patriarchal institutions, he nonetheless calls attention to the non-homosocial potentialities immanent to this bond (Roach 2012, 46).

sadder. At first, I did not know what it was, but when I realized that it was love, I was scared at myself. I want to hide, but cannot bear to. Because, he makes people feel warm. After a long time of struggle, I decided to suppress myself: liking someone is no big deal, as long as I don't let you find out about it it'll be fine. This type of feeling is very bitter, but also very sweet. A taste beyond words...

The idea of me and you together is impossible, but as long as I can continue seeing you, I will have enough from this life. I only hope that you do not disgust me. I just can't help liking you... (12)

In Mandarin Chinese, the pronunciations of “her” and “him” sound the same, and so this textual wordplay clues readers in to the homoerotic nature of Wang Shaohong's confession.⁵² The other soldiers in the story's diegesis, however, do not pick up on this conceit. They misunderstand Shaohong's confession and ask briefly who this “mysterious woman” is, but quickly dismiss his spontaneous monologue by advising him to “just straightforwardly tell her [his] feelings” rather than “torturing himself” over it (12).

The next pairing is between Weijun and He Shuai, where He Shuai is dared to “mimic a woman singing a song” (12). He Shuai readily takes on the task, with “one hand holding onto the shape of a microphone” and the other “hand curled into *lanhuazhi* (兰花指),” a hand pose traditionally used by female characters in Beijing Opera. At the end of the song, the other soldiers are stunned by the fact that his “performance was so real” – a simulacrum “real” enough to cause Weijun and Jin Gui's faces to “turn redder and redder, and then even redder and redder, like the sun setting in the West” (12). Not only does this scene engender clear references to Judith Butler's theory of gender performance, it also alludes to China's history of *Dan* actors in Beijing Opera.⁵³ As discussed in previous chapters, Butler posits that gender identity is the result

⁵² The male-referent 他 and the female-referent 她 are both pronounced *ta*.

⁵³ The *Dan* (旦) refers to any female role in Beijing opera and is a traditional aesthetic practice entrenched in homoerotic implications. Traditionally, all *Dan* roles were played by men. Four famous *Dan* actors are Mei Lanfang, Cheng Yanqiu, Shang Xiaoyun, and Xun Huisheng. The prevalent custom of *xiadan* (dallying with *dan*) implies the intimate relationship between *dan* female impersonators and their admirers from officialdom or the literati (Zhang 1965, 1627-1638). A popular novel of the 18th century, *Pinhua Baojian* (A Treasured Mirror for the Appreciation of

of reiterated acting – one that produces the effect of a static gender while obscuring the contradiction and instability of any single person's gender act. In this view, the specific act of performing gender constitutes who people are, and one's learned performance of gendered behavior (e.g.: masculine or feminine traits) can disrupt heteronormative ideals. Therefore, He Shuai's overt enactment of gendered behavior as a female singer destabilizes the binary gender construction of man and woman, masculine and feminine, and by extension, blurs the distinction between homosexual and heterosexual behaviors.

The likening of He Shuai's performance to a *Dan* role advances the centrality of gender fluidity and homosexuality associated with the *tongzhi* identity, grounding these traits in Chinese cultural traditions. On this point, it is possible to view *Dan* roles in terms of drag and what Butler has singled out as “a way not only to think about how gender is performed, but how it is resignified through collective terms” (Butler 2004a, 216; 2004b).⁵⁴ This effect is further evident in “Commitment” when Weijun teases He Shuai for not being able to grow a beard, calling him a “transvestite” (人妖 *renyao*), but later reflects that he first fell in love with He Shuai during “[his] performance mimicking a female singer” (17; 36). Thus, the exhibition of “transgender” through He Shuai's *Dan* performance is akin to drag in that it “not only mak[es] us question what is real, and what has to be, but ... show[s] us how contemporary notions of reality can be questioned, and new modes of reality instituted” (Butler 2004a, 217; 2004b). He Shuai's singing performance reveals a form of gendered ventriloquism on which the artistic and iconographic, but markedly feminine, *Dan* tradition is predicated. By the same token, He Shuai's appropriation

'Flowers'), depicts a protagonist who is clearly engaged in a homosexual relationship with two boy *dan* actors, revealing a fashionable addiction to the boy *dan* actors in Beijing at the time. Wang Mengsheng, a scholar of the late nineteenth century, noted that many young male *dan* in Beijing were well known for their homosexual appeal (Kang 2008). He emphasized that the appreciation of *xianggu* was inextricably tied to the experience of homoerotic pleasures (Wang 1972, 143-44). For more information, refer to: Min, Tian. (2000); Li, Lingling (2001); Wu, Cuncun (2004).

⁵⁴ In Butler's view, when men impersonate women, consciously assuming the feminine in exaggerated form, they enact a parody of femininity that reveals its constructed nature and offers the critical distance necessary for resistance.

of a *Dan* role specific to traditional Chinese culture asserts a persona mimicking femininity and inherently draws attention to the fluidity of gender identity itself. In staging a feminine aesthetic of male acting central to Beijing Opera, He Shuai overtly performs femininity, but subversively also performs the *very process of gender performativity* itself rooted in distinct Chinese familial-cultural roots.

This critical scene foreshadows later developments of homoerotic desire between the soldiers during and after the war. The character development of Weijun and He Shuai educes the notion of gender performativity, where they are positioned in masculine and feminine roles respective to each other. Weijun is described as an ideal masculine figure: he is “tall and strongly built,” “dependable and sturdy as a mountain,” and an excellent soldier who “trains without end to be the best fighter” (4; 7; 19). In turn, He Shuai is “weak” when he first enters the army due to his “Young Master” (少爷 *shaoye*) and pampered background, where his “results [during training] were never really good” (4). Upon joining Squad Two, he was always the one “falling behind after the others” and getting sick or injured after training exercises, but is requested to entertain the other soldiers during breaks with his “beautiful singing voice” (4; 5; 12). At this juncture, Butler’s ideas about gender performance as discursive practices are appropriate to examine He Shuai and Weijun’s characterizations. In *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (1993), Butler posits that the body’s intelligibility in relation to sex and gender is produced at the site of performativity or “specific modality of power as discourse” (187). As such, she maintains that all sexual identities are constitutive repetitions of a “phantasmatic original” working through a normative force – the practice of reiteration – to establish itself (Butler 1993, 187).⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Butler interrogates the notion of queer in association with materiality as a site of “*generation or origination*” with the “certain capacity to originate and compose” (1993:31, emphasis in original). She argues that as the body is

But how are military *tongzhi* figures and brotherly camaraderie resignified as homosexual *tongzhi* and gay relations? By illustrating gender performance, “Commitment” not only reveals the fluidity of gender but also how homosocial bonds fostering mentorship and solidarity can be congruent with the homoerotic friendship of an intimate gay male couple. The distinct masculine and feminine roles exhibited in Weijun and He Shuai’s relationship are made evident when they spend time alone in the jungle together. This exhibition of gender performativity also utilizes the military as an institution predicated on reiterative training to enforce a specific identity of the patriotic soldier. The military environment in “Commitment” is presented as a space marked by compulsory performance for both discipline and desire, complementing and reinforcing Butler’s proposed process of subject formation.

As the soldiers leave the trenches after their last battle, He Shuai sprains his ankle and is accidentally left behind by the troop. When Weijun realizes that He Shuai is missing, he goes back to search for him and finds him unable to walk. Weijun rescues him by carrying him on his back, gruffly asserting that “[he] has been carrying firewood on his back since the age of five” and that in comparison carrying He Shuai “is nothing” (15). However, Weijun falls from exhaustion and catches a fever from being soaked by the rain, and He Shuai tenderly nurses him, feeding him food and water “like he was feeding a baby” (16). After several nights in the jungle, they come across a deserted wooden hut, and decide to stay there to shelter from the incessant rain of the monsoon season. To relieve ennui, He Shuai teaches Weijun to waltz, and sings a heartfelt Cantonese song about the moon on several occasions. One night as they are sleeping outside and “gazing at the full moon,” He Shuai spontaneously starts singing *Lonely Traveler at the Edge of the World* 《天涯孤客》. As he explains, it is “a song about the moon ... [telling]

clearly matter, then how it comes to materialize, mean, or matter is contingent on its origination, transformation, and potentiality.

the story of a man drifting outside, who sees a moon, and thinks of his hometown” (18). Weijun grows partial to the song, and asks He Shuai to sing it at night before they fall asleep.

This song brings to mind numerous Chinese poems featuring the reflection of the moon as a popular motif for love and homesickness.⁵⁶ The lyrical refrain of “smiling at the bright moon and moonlight reflected in the pond [笑对朗月月光光照地塘上]” also evokes the well-known Chinese aphorism, “like flowers in the mirror, and the reflection of the moon in the water” (镜花水月 *jinhua shuiyue*), alluding to the ephemeral and illusory nature of mortal existence (Chen 1984; Rojas 2000). Along the lines of this reading, the literary trope of the moon’s reflection in a pool of water also has a long tradition of being associated with themes of gender fluidity, addressing the tenuous relation between visual perception and the construction of gender (Rojas 2000, 35). In the Chinese tradition, one prominent example of this relationship between the moon’s reflection and gender fluidity is found in the figure of Guanyin (观音), a transsexual bodhisattva, who is paradigmatically depicted as gazing at the moon’s reflection in a pool of water (Rojas 2008, 9).⁵⁷ Hence, Guanyin’s association with the Buddhist phrase and “water-moon” imagery suggests a specific skepticism of the reliability of gendered appearance in addition to a broader skepticism of perceived reality (Rojas 2008, 7-8).

In “Commitment,” the moon is a recurrent symbol that connects He Shuai and Weijun’s friendship during and after the war: it is mentioned whenever the two men spend time alone together or think about each other at night. In this way, references to the moon reflect key

⁵⁶ For example, possibly the most famous poem is Li Bai’s (李白) *Night Reflections* 《夜思》 in which he gazes at the moon and broods over missing his hometown. The moon as a symbol of love is also known to have been beloved by many Chinese poets: in A.D. 762, the well-known poet Li Taibo drowned from leaning over the edge of a boat one night in a drunken attempt to embrace the reflection of the moon (Williams 2006).

⁵⁷ In the Indian Buddhist tradition, Guanyin was originally a male bodhisattva, represented by the masculine figure of Avalokitesvara. Over time, the bodhisattva was feminized when introduced into China via translations of Buddhist scriptures (Rojas 2000:35). Allusions to this phenomenon can be found in several classical Chinese works. See, for example: Tang Xianzu. *Mudan Ting*. Scene 28, p. 153, and scene 38, p. 156. (Cyril Birch, *The Peony Pavilion*, pp. 158 and 216.)

developments in their changing relationship from military comrades to gay lovers. It is helpful to remember, therefore, that the moon also has a long history of being associated with the Moon Elder (月下老人 *yuexia laoren*, also known as 月老 *yuelao*), the God of Marriage, who is supposed to connect, by an invisible red thread, persons who are destined to marry (Williams 2006). After He Shuai's wife asks for a divorce, he goes out for a walk and gazes at the moon: "Raising his head, all I saw was the moon, big and round; this type of moon really made him recall a lot of things" (23). When He Shuai and Weijun are reunited, they go to sing at a KTV bar. He Shuai sings his song about the moon and at the end of the night the narrator reveals that "this night was just like that night 10 years ago next to the water spring, forever seared into He Shuai's sea of memories" (25).

As Weijun walks home after spending the evening with He Shuai, he "raises his head and sees a big moon... [Weijun] smiled to himself, musing at how it seemed so many of his memories had to do with this moon" (26). It is also during the Mid-Autumn Festival celebrating the full moon that He Shuai first thinks about introducing Weijun to his family (27). Later, after a night "strolling in the park and admiring the moon," the two men finally acknowledge their love for each other and He Shuai "raises his head to see that big round moon: he felt like crying out, this feeling of happiness pressed down on him so heavily it was hard for him to breathe" (31). Hence, what was initially a symbol of brotherly companionship in times of adversity comes to represent their shifting relationship and desire, reflecting strong male homosocial bonds that mature into homosexual love over time.

The moon in this text therefore signifies concomitant changes in the male homosocial-cum-homoerotic continuum and patriarchal kinship systems positioned within a framework of patriarchal heterosexuality. This moon leitmotif presented as an extension of He Shuai's characterization capitalizes on the fact that the moon, in traditional Chinese culture, represents

Yin (阴), the concrete essence of the female or negative principle in nature (Williams 2006). As such, recurring references to the moon accentuates He Shuai's feminine behavioral traits and gender performance. He Shuai's fondness of the moon thus illustrates his projective identification with this conventionally feminine symbol, together with the connotations of gender fluidity and visual indeterminacy which that icon has historically embodied. In other words, gender performance is reinforced by moon symbolism, destabilizing the homo/heterosexual and masculine/feminine relational binaries to emphasize a continuum of relations between the homosocial and homosexual.

With repeated depictions of feminine behavior, it is striking that actual women play a rather peripheral role in "Commitment," and appear to serve the sole purpose of strengthening homosocial/homosexual male bonds. In particular, the presence of Jiang Xiaoyun, a female nurse working in the army, and Zhou Lili, He Shuai's wife, generate the structural context of triangular, heterosexual tensions, but ironically only reinforce the homosocial/homosexual continuum of intimacy between He Shuai and Weijun. In discussing the relation of heterosexual to homosocial bonds, Sedgwick cites an essay by Gayle Rubin to argue that "patriarchal heterosexuality can be best discussed in terms of ... the traffic of women: it is the use of women as exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men" (1985, 25-26). In this view, relationships are not established between a man and a woman, but between two men, where the woman serves "as a 'conduit of a relationship' in which the true *partner* is a man" (Sedgwick 1985, 26, emphasis in original). The women that intersperse He Shuai and Weijun's lives reflect this account: encounters with Jiang Xiaoyun and Zhou Lili prompt the men to recognize and strengthen their true homoerotic desires. Accordingly, the portrayal of the men's response to women contests the dichotomy between homosocial and homosexual male bonds to concretize *tongzhi* relations as an all-encompassing concept.

Although conversation about women crop up frequently throughout the text, they are always mentioned in connection to their impact on male-male bonds. This is explicit in Volume One as the soldiers are immersed in an all-male military environment where “the subject of women was never met with silence” (10). When He Shuai and Weijun talk about their futures after the war, Weijun admits that he “really admires Jiang Xiaoyun” and “wants to find a wife,” but laments that he “can never be a match for Xiaoyun” and that “[he] really doesn’t know what he would want in a wife ... because he has never had [a woman] before” (17). He Shuai urges him to confess his feelings to Xiaoyun, but Weijun loses his temper and shouts at him for “making [him] sick” and “warns [him] not to bring up any ideas about Xiaoyun again” (17). In response, He Shuai tries to comfort Weijun saying that he “is the ringing image of an ideal man,” to which Weijun retorts that “if [he] was really that good, [He Shuai] should just marry him instead” (17). Here, it is conversation about a woman that drives He Shuai and Weijun to first consider the ambiguity of their relationship to each other.

Similarly, it is after He Shuai’s divorce from Zhou Lili that prompts him “to start having extreme doubts,” where he later admits that “he has lost interest in women” (22; 26). Zhou Lili had accused He Shuai of being “unable to love her” because he could only think “of the war ... [and] of [his] Squad Leader,” leading He Shuai to realize that he was “truly in love with Weijun ... [and] nobody else” (21; 34). Moreover, it is only when Zhou Lili wants to get remarried that He Shuai is driven to fully pursue his relationship with Weijun, proposing plans for gay marriage (37-38). As such, these triangular schemas introduce heterosexual associations amidst homosocial relations, revealing that emerging patterns of male friendship, rivalry, mutual care, and love cannot be understood outside of its relation to women. To this end, the abstraction of women and heterosexual relations are juxtaposed against tangible experiences of male

homosocial/homosexual intimacy, elevating the transcendent status of a male homosocial destination of desire.

[Gay Comrades: A Mode of Existence between Intimate Friendship and Friendly Romance?]

With regard to male homosocial desire as a paragon of love that potentially transcends differences between men, it is interesting to note that the homosexuality depicted throughout “Commitment” turns out to represent anything but actual sexual relations. This aesthetic detail speaks to Foucault’s argument that homosexuality should not be a fixed identity but rather a fluid horizon of relational and ontological possibilities grounded in same-sex friendship, rather than a sexual act. By presenting homosexuality as a matter of friendship, Foucault posits an intimate homosocial relation between men detached from images of sex (Roach 2012). He claims that the idea of “two young men meeting in the street, seducing each other with a look, grabbing each other’s asses and getting each other off in a quarter of an hour” advances a “neat image of homosexuality without any possibility of generating unease,” and hence is ineffective in challenging social norms (Foucault 1981, 136). Instead, Foucault argues that it is “affection, tenderness, friendship, fidelity, camaraderie, and companionship” – i.e., sentimentalized forms of homosexual intimacy – that is “troubling” and more potently subversive of hegemonic ideologies (1981, 136). Hence, friendship and sex are not diametrically opposed; rather, friendship offers gay politics an exodus from sexuality and the relational models that accompany it (Roach 2012). In Foucault’s view, insofar as the *tongzhi* community exhibits the “tying together of unforeseen lines of force and the subsequent formation of new alliances,” the ties that bind this diverse community might be best designated as bonds of friendship (1981, 136).

In “Commitment,” the romance between He Shuai and Weijun is portrayed in a way that the two men are lovers and intimate without necessarily being homosexual. As a gay love story, it is striking that homosexuality is not mentioned until the very end of the text. Instead, an emphasis on *tongzhi* relations conflates the label’s connotations of military comrade and homosexual comrade, thereby rendering both meanings of the term simultaneously intelligible via the figure of the gay soldier. To develop this image, the ubiquitous presence of *tongzhi* is stressed. This is made explicit in He Shuai’s reflection that: “Actually, there are many *tongzhi* around... Everyone felt that it was relatively normal; I also did not think much of it. Everyone’s human, it’s just that ... some people like others of the same kind” (32). Indirect references to homosexual couplings are also evident when soldiers get particularly attached to one another (for example, when other soldiers from Squad Two are depicted in pairs). When homosexual relations are finally explicitly mentioned, they are presented as a natural progression from the homosocial relations that were cultivated in the army. Otherwise stated, two men get together as a couple in which the experiences of desire and duty can be shared: their passionate lifetime union is only an extension of the friendship and loyalty they have always felt for each other while serving in the army. Accordingly, He Shuai and Weijun’s homoerotic desire is described as “a feeling that has existed for a long time” but as something that they “did not understand before” and previously dismissed as “brotherly care” – an emotion that later unfolds as a “lifelong commitment” to loving each other (34; 35; 42). Nevertheless, romantic scenes do not describe anything further than the two men cuddling or kissing, and even then, only rather abstractly.

By emphasizing a de-eroticized intimacy between the two men, the text presents a departure from the limited and limiting forms of State-sponsored heteronormative associations to gesture towards an expanded and unmapped field of relations. This narrative development

evinces Foucault's argument for the need to develop a "homosexual culture" beyond "the sexual act itself" to escape the "readymade [formula] of the pure sexual encounter" (1981, 137). In his view, this is necessary to introduce "a diversification that would also be a form of relationship and ... a 'way of life'" where "to be 'gay' ... is not to identify with the psychological traits and the visible masks of the homosexual but to try to define and develop a way of life" (Foucault 1981, 138). By examining "Commitment" through this Foucaultian lens, the text introduces *tongzhi* as a concept that transcends age, status, and social class, replacing it with a diversity of desirable relations. The military Comrade story draws upon the historical importance of friendship, equality, and non-biological kinship promoted by the Communist Party and epitomized by the ideological use of *tongzhi* as a form of address. The queering of homosocial camaraderie in the national military, therefore, challenges general social norms and inscribes a new form of homosexual intimacy that does not conflict with Chinese cultural values.

In the absence of a delineation of heterosexual and homosexual behaviors based on the sex act, the tricky issue of sexual orientation or object choice in He Shuai and Weijun's relationship gets resolved by what Constance Penley has referred to "an idea of *cosmic destiny*: the two men are somehow meant for each other and homosexuality has nothing to do with it" (1991, 487).⁵⁸ Although He Shuai and Weijun eventually acknowledge their homosexuality, they do so only as a result of their specific love for each other, rather than due to a more general desire for men. This is manifest in He Shuai's proclamation that "[he] has met many other men on the streets, but does not like a single one of them. The only person [he] likes is [Weijun]" (34). Both men also repeatedly emphasize that they "belong to each other in this life and the next,"

⁵⁸ In her discussion of slash fiction and female fandom of *Star Trek*, Penley observes that a question often debated is whether Kirk and Spock are having homosexual sex, or whether they can be defined as homosexual. She contends that slash authors frequently "try to write their stories so that somehow the two men are lovers without being homosexual" so as to "[put] them above the crude intolerance, xenophobia, and homophobia they abhor in the society around them" (1992:487). Through this aesthetic style of "having them together sexually but not somehow being homosexual," the stories actually allow for a greater range of fan identification and desire in the slash universe with regard to the binary oppositions of sex and gender in the heteronormative real world (1992, 497).

will “never be separated,” are “unable to go on living” without each other, and do not desire any other men (34; 37; 41; 42). Furthermore, the characters stress their identification with same-sex relations as *tongzhi* rather than *tongxinglian*, grounding their relationship in a term that subverts conventional paradigms of homosexuality.

But what is served, at the level of fiction, by having He Shuai and Weijun together romantically as homosexuals, yet somehow devoid of sexual relations altogether? This aesthetic style allows for a much greater range of identification and desire that deconstructs and renegotiates the meaning of a “*tongzhi*” identity – and by extension, what Foucault has termed “the homosexual mode of life” (137). In military Comrade texts, homosexuality is presented “not [as] a form of desire but something to desire,” where *tongzhi* relations signify a multiplicity of relationships along the homosocial and homosexual continuum. More specifically, *tongzhi* has a tri-layered signification: the term connotes homosexuality in popular culture, refers to revolutionary intentions as promoted in Chinese Communist discourse, and also evokes the socialist ideal for an equal society that transcends all heteronormative constraints. Indeed, military Comrade fiction speaks to Foucault’s notion of “the ‘slantwise’ position of [the homosexual]” represented by the polymorphous category of *tongzhi* in contemporary Chinese society (1981, 138). The deconstruction and reconstruction of a *tongzhi* position “lay[s] out [diagonal lines] in the social fabric” to “reopen affective and relational virtualities” that “allow these virtualities to come to light” – namely, the “slantwise” position of a heterosexual/homosocial/homosexual person connected to the *tongzhi* identity.

This reappropriation of a *tongzhi* positionality to contest Communist discourse and heteronormative ideologies is paralleled by the shifting meaning of Tiananmen in “Commitment.” As one of China’s most emotionally and historically charged spaces, the Tiananmen gate and square has a long history, and its symbolic significance has altered over the years in relation to

China's imperial and bureaucratic world as well as revolutionary past. Built in 1415 in the Ming Dynasty, the Tiananmen Gate itself – The Gate of Heavenly Peace – was meant to be an entryway into the imperial and bureaucratic world of the Forbidden City. In Imperial China, Tiananmen played a significant role in the rituals of royal governance as the place where the emperor's edicts were announced. It became a public space only at moments of grave national crisis.⁵⁹ However, as the Square progressively developed into a political and educational hub during the Republican Era, it also became a forum for rallies and debates over national policy during the Republican Era.⁶⁰ The May Fourth demonstration in 1919 had the greatest impact on this whole period of Chinese history, symbolically marking the inauguration of Tiananmen Square as a fully public and anti-governmental space (Schell 1990).⁶¹ Tiananmen Square thereafter became the regular, chosen location for Chinese demonstrators to hold national rallies.

When Mao Zedong came to power, Tiananmen was recreated as both a public and official location endorsing the Communist leadership, underscored when giant photographs of Mao and Zhu De, the Red Army's leading general, were erected. After the Cultural Revolution in 1976, however, the people reclaimed Tiananmen as an open space for discussion concerning democracy and the arts (Spence 1990). Thus, although Tiananmen still served as an intractable

⁵⁹ One such moment occurred in 1644, when Li Zicheng, a peasant rebel from Shaanxi Province, seized the city of Beijing. During the heavy fighting that ensued, Tiananmen was badly damaged, perhaps almost destroyed. The gateway in Beijing today, with its five archways and elaborate superstructure, is a reconstructed version that was completed in 1651 (Spence 1990).

⁶⁰ In the Republican Era, the new Department of Justice and Parliament were built on the west side of Tiananmen Square. Numerous universities and colleges are also established near Tiananmen. For example, Beijing University's main campus units for literature, science, and law, were all just to the east of the Forbidden City, within walking distance to Tiananmen. Other colleges were also clustered near the square, including the prestigious Tsinghua University (Spence 1990).

⁶¹ The "May 4 Movement" refers to an entire event where Chinese scholars, scientists, writers, and artists struggled to explore new ways of strengthening China and incorporating the twin forces of science and democracy into the life of their society and government. Linked in its turn to a study of the plight of China's workers and peasants, and to the theoretical and organizational arguments of Marxism-Leninism, the May 4 Movement had a direct bearing and influence on the growth of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which convened its first congress in 1921 (Schell 1990).

center of the government's power,⁶² the square also became a beacon of opposition. In contemporary China, Tiananmen is a symbolic space commonly associated with the Chinese Communist Party and Maoist ideology, but also of conflict and (failed) revolutionary intent, especially after the student protests and crackdown of 1989.

The resignification of Tiananmen as a place rooted in China's Imperial history to one connoting Maoist ideology and associated with revolutionary intent mirrors the reappropriation of *tongzhi* in Communist discourse. Throughout "Commitment," references to Tiananmen initially invoke it as a place representing the military comrades' "commitment" to national duty. However, by the end of the story, Tiananmen is resignified as a place that enables the emergence of non-normative *tongzhi* genders and sexualities, emphasized when He Shuai and Weijun declare their lifelong bond to each other during an outing to the Square. Tiananmen in "Commitment" therefore becomes a space that facilitates gay bonding, ironically queering the Square's longstanding symbolism of bureaucratic power.

Weijun brings up Tiananmen as a place he wants to visit after the war, to which the other soldiers in Squad Two respond by committing to make a trip there together, emphasizing that "if we survive, we need to go together... We need to go" (12). Furthermore, He Shuai promises Weijun more than once to take him to Tiananmen (12; 23; 26). Hence, the aspiration to visit Tiananmen holds the soldiers together in dire times facing life and death during war. At the end of the story, He Shuai and Weijun finally make this trip to Tiananmen. However, the scene that develops at the Square itself has very different implications: when posing for a picture together, He Shuai kisses Weijun on the cheek. This gesture leads to an elaborate public disclosure of their *tongzhi* relationship, where they also announce their "marriage." In front of Jian Hong and Jian

⁶² The Government used the square to hold solemn rallies and funeral ceremonies for Mao, who died in late 1976. The square was further expanded to house an elaborate mausoleum for Mao to the south of the Revolutionary monument (Spence 1990).

Fei, Weijun's siblings, He Shuai insists that he wants to "make it clear" to everyone that "he is [Weijun's] wife" (43). Weijun reaffirms that "Brother He has given [him] a family, [making him] very fortunate" and hopes that his siblings "can support [them] with [their] blessings" (43). In this scene, Tiananmen becomes the site for *tongzhi* identification and gay love, transforming the Square into a public arena where homosexual relations are made visible. Nonetheless, by positioning each other as husband and wife, He Shuai and Weijun reveal that they still situate themselves within a heteronormative paradigm.

"Commitment" was originally serialized in 2007, but was edited and reposted in 2008 with an appended epilogue. This epilogue takes the form of three diary entries from Xia Xiaofei, He Shuai's nephew, expanding the time horizon of the story to include a third generation: the generation of youth in contemporary China today, and how they receive *tongzhi* relations. Xiaofei documents his experience going on a beach vacation with his Jiujiu⁶³ (He Shuai) and Uncle Lu (Weijun). The boy observes that the two men are very close friends – "just like brothers, ... almost even closer than brothers" – and deduces that their intimacy must have resulted from shared military experiences (E.1).⁶⁴ Even so, Xiaofei idolizes the men for their camaraderie, and exclaims that "when [he] grows up, [he] wants to have such a friendship as well" and similarly make "a lifelong good friend" (E.1).

One day out at the beach, Xiaofei notices that He Shuai had gone underwater when swimming. Weijun dives repeatedly to rescue him, and resuscitates him with CPR. Xiaofei is in tears from worry, but picks up on their loving interaction once He Shuai is revived. He Shuai tells Weijun that his good leg had cramped up and he had started sinking, but "wasn't afraid" because he knew that Weijun "was just by his side" and that he "could not possibly die" (E.3). He Shuai and Weijun then kiss each other, and even though He Shuai tries to pretend to Xiaofei

⁶³ A term referring to one's mother's brother in Chinese society. In this case, Jiujiu refers to He Shuai.

⁶⁴ Citations refer to Epilogue diary entry 1.

that it was just “manually assisted breathing,” the child instantly understands the nature of their relationship. As Xiaofei writes: “Although I am a child, I’m not stupid, okay? ... In this world, I know that ‘tongzhi’ is a word with multiple meanings. ... Isn’t it just two men in love? It’s not so rare” (E.3). The narrative ends on a positive note in which Xiaofei agrees to “keep their secret” with the promise of being “good friends,” where Xiaofei asserts that “no matter what, [Uncle Lu] is still my idol” and that “as long as they have my blessings, [He Shuai and Weijun] will definitely live a fortunate and happy life” (E.3).

The emphasis on He Shuai and Weijun’s friendship in the epilogue once again invokes Foucault’s argument of friendship as an alternative relational form – as “a desire, an uneasiness, a desire-in-uneasiness that exists among a lot of people” – enabled by homosexuality (1981, 137). The fluid movement from homosocial friendship to homosexual love embodied within the *tongzhi* identity speaks to the notion of homosexuality as an uncharted and labile space of relational possibilities. He Shuai and Weijun’s version of friendship shifts away from homosexuality as fixed identity by focusing on *tongzhi* relations as a familiar catalogue of attitudes and behaviors associated with mutual care, responsibility, and understanding. Their relationship stresses a homosocial/sexual continuum comprised of lifelong loyalty to each other, reaffirming the conception of friendship valorized in queer discourse as a respite from social ostracism and an alternative to compulsory heterosexuality.

Thus, “Commitment” presents an account of queer community through the figure of gay male military *tongzhi*, developing a relational form that does not necessarily depend upon the conjugal couple or blood kinship, but nonetheless presents a legible and appealing image of intimacy. The text embraces friendship as a model for same-sex relations within a dominant heteronormative paradigm, emphasizing homosocial equality and longevity. Ultimately, “Commitment” forwards *tongzhi* characters grounded in friendship to replace the disrupted

binary between homosexual and heterosexual behaviors with a continuum of homosocial(ist) intimacy and desires.

[Military Gay Comrades: Negotiating the Homosocial(ist) Tongzhi Identity]

When military Comrade stories ironically position homosexual characters as patriotic and masculine soldiers, the *tongzhi* community establishes a form of emancipation from the Communist authority that represses and emasculates them. In “Commitment,” we see how military Comrade stories contribute to an effort to specify the proper boundaries of the State’s authority in relation to other increasingly visible forms of social and political coercion towards homosexual desire. Experiences in the army, a conventional model for infallibility and discipline suppressing all symptoms of the human body, is exposed as an institution dominated by the overwhelming effects of emotional breakdowns and uncontrollable desires.

By repositioning queer characters within the figure of the military comrade representing the strong arm of the Communist regime, “Commitment” dismantles and inverts the relational structures that form the very backbone of patriarchal homosociality and the Party system. The work illustrates how the army brings men from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds together in an intimate space where same-sex friendship and love short-circuits political structures and class distinctions. Throughout the text, there is a sustained strategic blurring of relational boundaries – between friendship and romance, homosociality and homosexuality, soldier and lover. As a sub-genre, military Comrade fiction rethink the meaning of being *tongzhi* and the scope of *tongzhi wenxue* itself, repositioning the category of *tongzhi* as a mode of intimacy outside heterosexual norms. With an emphasis on friendship and camaraderie, the structure of the story allows the conception of *tongzhi* relations in the absence of sex altogether. Instead, the *tongzhi* identity and homosexuality becomes intelligible through same-sex relationships at the heart of

heteronormative ideals. At the same time, however, the novella reveals that characters are inevitably trapped within an institutional framework governed by patriarchal conventions. This is evident when the text co-opts the marriage trope and inscribes gender performance within male same-sex relations.

The idealization of queer friendship with respect to homosexual relations is central to Christopher Nealon's book, *Foundlings* (2001), in which he develops his method of "affect-genealogy."⁶⁵ For Nealon, queer texts are traversed by powerful longings that are both corporeal and historical; in their articulate hopes and desires, these texts gesture both toward impossible affiliations and a queer community connected across time. Nealon's study of "affect-genealogy" is germane to a discussion of emergent *tongzhi* texts and communities, particularly military Comrade narratives. By drawing upon Nealon to read "Commitment" as a "foundling text" bridging three generations, the work brings together ascetic but passionate outsiders who share the desire for a *tongzhi* bond. As Nealon writes:

Because [foundling texts] do not properly belong either to the inert terminal narratives of inversion or to the triumphant, progressive narrative of achieving ethnic coherence, they suggest another time, a time of expectation, in which their key stylistic gestures, choice of genre, and ideological frames all point to an inaccessible future, in which the inarticulate desires that mobilize them will find some "hermeneutic friend" beyond the historical horizon of their unintelligibility to themselves (2001, 23).

In this view, foundling texts such as "Commitment" express a desire for an "inaccessible future": a yearning for structures of life and communities that are not yet possible in twentieth-century China (Nealon 2001, 23). Nonetheless, these texts inhabit a "time of expectation" as they wait for others – "hermeneutic friend[s]" – who will know how to read and empathize with them (Nealon 2001). This sentiment is evident in the epilogue, where Qing Feng indicates that Chinese

⁶⁵ Nealon describes the way that contemporary gay and lesbian subjects attempt to find a place in history – to "feel historical" – by imagining alternative forms of community or queer kinship (Nealon 2001).

youth of the 21st century will be the ones affecting change in how *tongzhi* communities are established and perceived.

In contemporary China, hope for alternative forms of queer relation and community is a salient issue, particularly as *tongzhi* try to articulate alternatives to marriage and the heteronormality of social and gendered life. There is a need to expand the public sense of what counts as a relationship. Through references to Communist ideology, the military, and homosocial(ist) desires, military Comrade fiction sustains a desexualized image of the *tongzhi* couple. In the long run, these stories attempt to articulate a unified community somewhere between family and nation – a *tongzhi* movement based on same-sex friendship and intimacy that transcends hegemonic political, social, and cultural boundaries.

CONCLUSION

[From Cozy Nest to Empty Nest: Parallel Communities in Print and Virtual Spaces]

In Hu Fayun's novel *Such Is This World@sars.come* 《如焉@sars.come》 (2006), Ru Yan is a middle-aged widow whose only son leaves China to study abroad in France. Before leaving, the son teaches Yan how to use a computer to stay in touch with him overseas, and initiates her to the world of the internet. Yan comes across a forum called The Empty Nest for parents of overseas students, touted as a place where “old birds support one another” after their “little chicks have all flown away” (17-20). On these forums, she rediscovers her fondness for writing, pondering that the internet is “like gazing into the starry sky, vast and limitless,” a space where she can express herself seemingly under the cloak of anonymity (30). The more Yan writes, the more accolades she receives online from other “Empty Nesters,” eventually also attracting the affectionate attention of Comrade Liang Jinsheng, the city mayor and a prominent Party official. After some time, some of “the old birds of the Empty Nest” announced an offline gathering, and Yan meets the other forum participants in person (149). Yan's newly formed on- and offline worlds collide, and it is through this collision that she sheds her naiveté toward matters of Chinese officialdom and its social surveillance mechanisms.

First serialized online from 2003 to 2004, *Such Is This World@sars.come* uses the internet to tell a story about writing on the internet, underscoring how Chinese online fiction is intertwined with issues of politics, social control, gender relations, and notions of kinship in contemporary China. The story illustrates how relationships – both old and new – have been shaped by the internet: the computer allows Yan to maintain a close bond with her son on the other side of the world, and also facilitates her connection to a virtual Empty Nest community in her immediate world. Yan's online activities ultimately impact her offline life in profound ways,

altering her perspective and raising questions about the premises of family relations and community formation in contemporary Chinese society. The novel opens a panoramic historiographical window on modern China, where in societies, as in psyches, what is repressed is revelatory and manifest as textual (re)production. The internet's sheer volume of information allows it to bypass or evade traditional media gatekeepers such as print editors and State censors, ushering in an ever-expanding labyrinth of voices and perspectives on a new interactive platform (Zhou 2006; Qiang 2011).

The Empty Nest in *Such Is This World@sars.come* affords us an opportunity to return to the Cozy Nest anecdote in *Crystal Boys* discussed in the introduction to this thesis. Both Nests function as evocative metonyms for an interstitial meeting ground where issues of Comrade culture (both in terms of Chinese politics and sexuality), subjective experience, and literary platforms overlap – a space within which this thesis, as a whole, is embedded. The Cozy Nest and Empty Nest parallel rethinks the cluster of concerns around which this thesis has revolved: the imbrications of family, gender relations, intimacy, self-expression, and community formation in contemporary China. The public circulation of print or online texts such as *Crystal Boys* and *Such Is this World@sars.come* brings personal lived experiences into the realm of the visible, challenging general social norms regarding kinship relations, cultural traditions, and government rhetoric. In this sense, the figure of the Nest in these texts signifies both the limits and possibilities of community with the emergence of the internet, particularly with regard to the *tongzhi* subpopulation and their position within the margins of contemporary Chinese society.

Comrade writers take to the Chinese cyberspace to share private affairs on a publicly accessible platform, and in so doing destabilize preconceived notions of gender and sexuality while (re)constructing and (re)producing queer ones. This thesis considered the portrayals of

male homosexuality in four online Comrade texts with a critical eye to how they renegotiated the boundary between heterosexual and homosexual behaviors. “Beijing Story,” “The Illusive Mind,” “Huizi,” and “Commitment” each exhibit various literary strategies that simultaneously assimilate yet differentiate the *tongzhi* identity from Chinese heteronormative society.

In the case of Boy Love stories such as “Beijing Story” and “The Illusive Mind” discussed in Chapter One, conventional romance narratives are queered to juxtapose homosexual and heterosexual relations, revealing subjective experiences across both forms of intimacy. These stories re-present homosexuality through personal narratives that homologize same-sex and opposite-sex behaviors to emphasize shared emotional experiences, but ultimately posit same-sex intimacy as a paragon for love. This simultaneous assimilation of yet demarcation between same-sex and opposite-sex relations renders gay love newly intelligible in normative forms, countering negative stereotypes of homosexuality as criminal or pathological behavior. In each narrative, the main character’s account of homosexual and heterosexual relations manifests gendered positions where binary masculine and feminine positionalities are rendered performative. This first chapter contended that the exhibition of gender performativity thus allows hidden or socially repressed homosexual experiences to become legible within a heterosexual paradigm through Comrade love stories. However, it is important to note that these narratives are primarily effective only insofar as homosexual romance conforms to the syntax of heterosexual relations.

In Chapter Two, the connection between exposure and concealment is developed explicitly in Xiaoyang and Huizi’s shifting adolescent relationship as both boys come of age. In the story, abjection of the homosexual body is exposed through the figure of a “hooligan” Huizi and contrasted with Xiaoyang’s active suppression of his homoerotic desires. Xiaoyang’s

narrative mediates between the inner and outer worlds as he matures and grapples with acknowledging while at the same time obscuring his homosexuality. Upon witnessing the political and social ramifications that fall upon Huizi as he is forcibly exposed as a homosexual, Xiaoyang redoubles his efforts to conceal all evidence of his own same-sex desires. This internal conflict speaks to dialectics of visibility and non-visibility with regard to self-censorship and the marginal status of homosexuality, but also gestures at the rapidly changing landscape for models of gender and sexual identity in contemporary Chinese society. Ultimately, Xiaoyang's confrontation with Huizi's visibly abject body highlights the fissure between internal homoerotic desires and an external heterosexist reality, causing the men to lead fundamentally disjoint lives.

Finally, the intersection of private desires in public space converges most provocatively in Chapter Three's discussion of military Comrade fiction. "Commitment" reveals how the vagueness of homosocial-cum-homosexual relations is fundamental to camaraderie between men serving in the national army. Military Comrade stories evoke the homosocialism at the bedrock of Communist ideology, emphasizing a continuum of homosocial and homosexual behaviors rather than demarcating an innate sexuality. In "Commitment," He Shuai and Weijun's relationship presents homosocial/sexual intimacy grounded in an appealing image of reciprocity and care between men. These strong but ambiguous male homosocial affective bonds are lauded by the State to preserve soldiers as biopolitical subjects. At the end of the novella, He Shuai and Weijun's declaration of lifelong devotion to their gay communion at Tiananmen Square brings out issues of homoerotic desire at a prominent location symbolic of Chinese hegemonic power. This scene queers the People's Liberation Army as a State institution of ostensible masculinity and patriarchy. By disclosing the gay intimacy inherent within military *tongzhi* camaraderie, "Commitment" reconfigures the national military as an interstitial site of resistance where the

private spheres of homosexual and heterosexual affective relations become publicly visible as they overlap and merge.

In considering Mainland China's *tongzhi* community, the influence of the internet and online Comrade fiction has a striking contemporaneity. In recent years, online writings have changed not only the landscape of literary composition and fictional works, but also the modes of distribution, interpretation, and response to those texts (Ma 2010; Zhang 2011).⁶⁶ This ideological laboratory of a shared virtual sphere prompts individuals to develop a sense of intersubjectivity. Along these lines, the portrayal of gender performance in same-sex romance narratives, homosexual abjection in Comrade *bildungsroman*, and a homosocial and homosexual continuum in military Comrade fiction all present homoerotic experiences on the Chinese cyberspace. Taken together, these stories craft transitional worlds suspended between reality and fiction where homosexual and heterosexual identities intersect and coexist, appealing to a variety of reader identifications.

[Network Intimacies and Imagined Communities of Online Comrade Literature]

A recurring theme throughout this thesis concerns how literary and cultural productions circulate through social spaces, providing voyeuristic lenses through which readers can perceive, and identify with, the interpellating *tongzhi* subject position which is collectively created by and for them. In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983),

⁶⁶ As Ru Yan's experience in *Such is This World@sars.com* demonstrates, the internet becomes an arena where issues regarding China's sociopolitical landscape can be discussed. Personal opinions are disclosed to the judgment of a far-reaching public representing diverse interests, and individuals receive almost instantaneous feedback and censure on their self-published writings. Research has recognized that this process allows for ideas to evolve in response to social realities (Zhou 2006; Ma 2010). Thus, writers of online Comrade fiction work not in the real but in virtual space, and it is this virtuality that offers a certain degree of free expression, inspiring writers to reveal inner sentiments that conventional writing mediums do not allow.

Benedict Anderson famously explicates how the invention of the newspaper made it possible, for the first time, for persons to imagine themselves as members of modern nation-states bound by “deep, horizontal comradeship” (7). In extending this argument to modern China’s emergent *tongzhi* culture, we may be on the verge of a parallel transformation linked to technology and the construction of the online Comrade community.

Electronic and network technology breeds an innovative way of writing and provokes a new concept of the author (Ma 2010; Zhang 2011). In turn, the production of online Comrade literature becomes a collective and community building activity. The participatory landscape of virtual space is exhibited through features such as relay writing, a process whereby Comrade authors get reader feedback during the writing process (C.S.M. 2013).⁶⁷ For example, in the course of writing “Commitment,” many readers appealed to the author on behalf of the protagonist, He Shuai, fearing the imminence of a tragic ending they could not accept. Readers also debated the novel online, and some even took the initiative in writing or rewriting parts of the story for the author. This interactive process is evident in the serialized posting of “Commitment”: Qing Feng leaves footnotes at the end of each chapter to comment on reader feedback, and appends an epilogue in an edited re-posting in response to fan requests.⁶⁸ As such, the online medium of Comrade literature renders it difficult to distinguish the original author from readers who also contribute to writing. This process exemplifies the two-way communication and immediate interaction between Comrade writers and readers.⁶⁹ In this

⁶⁷ The participatory nature of online Chinese fiction has been noted in a number of studies. For examples, see Lugg 2011 and McDougall 2003.

⁶⁸ See the serialized posting here: <http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=353537>. It is also interesting to note that Chapter 38 in Volume Two, “Public Announcement [公告],” is actually devoted entirely to responding to reader comments.

⁶⁹ This line of analysis also ties in to arguments about Web 2.0 closely associated with Tim O’Reilly. In this view, the internet is envisioned as a collaborative medium, a place where people can all meet and read and write (Han 2011). Web 2.0 sites allow users to interact and collaborate with each other as active creators of user-generated

manner, reading is integral to writing, and vice versa. Online Comrade literature enables participants to be both author and reader, underscoring the ideal that everybody contributes to the collective Comrade community – and accordingly, everybody is *tongzhi*.

Numerous works have examined the participatory nature of online narratives to identify contexts where they contribute to community identity formation and sociopolitical action (e.g.: Alexander and Smith 1993; Beiner 1995; McDougall 2003). Indeed, popular erotic stories have consistently formed part of the process through which contemporary politics is rewritten by the public (Ku 1999). This thesis thus suggests that online Comrade stories not only reflect the marginalized realities of China's homosexual population, but foster a collaborative environment established on the *tongzhi* identity, contesting government regulations that encroach into Chinese citizens' private lives. At this point, important questions to ask are: how does the virtual space surrounding the online Comrade community connect people across different locations in simultaneous time? What are the implications of new media textual forms where novels are no longer a single bounded totality, but signify polymorphous voices and identities, and may literally be constructed by those voices/identities at the level of physical reality? To the extent that the Chinese State has always been haunted by the biopolitical potential of Comrade homosociality, what is the meaning of suppressed queer *tongzhi* identities emerging and bonding in porous virtual space?

China's censorship apparatus and authoritative regime has stifled mass action and protest by clipping social ties whenever any localized movements are in evidence (Zheng 2008; House 2011). Emerging from within this framework of social control, the internet facilitates publishing web content that is easily altered and reproduced compared to printed text in newspapers. This

content in a virtual community. This is contrasted with websites where people are limited to passive viewership (Han 2011).

flexibility allows diverse messages to proliferate, shifting with present necessity (Zhou 2006; C.S.M. 2013). In cyberspace, netizens create alternative discursive arenas to counter misleading ideologies, present their independent historical narratives, redefine their social and political objectives, and mobilize like-minded individuals (Chen 2012; Zhou 2006). These activities are critical tools in Chinese netizen's arsenal of political engagement; the sharing of ideas opens public discourse and empowers netizens to engage in resistance movements (Qiang 2011).

Although Comrade Literature exemplifies a loosely coordinated strategy by ordinary storytellers, the potential to renegotiate power paradigms in relation to gender, sexuality, societal pressures, and State power cannot be ignored. For Chinese people, generally, and the homosexual population, specifically, the online *tongzhi* platform exists as a rhizomatic⁷⁰ public space in which private narratives and common experiences are shared, compared, and retold. Through online literature, *tongzhi* writers and readers avoid State-imposed restrictions while using State-owned resources.⁷¹

Comrade narratives thus emphasize that prevailing norms perpetuated by the Chinese State are not the right ones, criticizing government policies and pointing out social needs that the State is unable to meet. Accordingly, the analysis of Chinese Comrade literature is not just an idiosyncratic interest, nor is it a mere titillating absorption. It becomes key to an understanding of the workings of sexual politics and self-identity formation in contemporary China: the

⁷⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari used the term "rhizomatic" to describe theory and research that allows for multiple, non-hierarchical entry and exit points in data representation and interpretation (1980). A rhizomatic model for cultural production is characterized by "ceaselessly established connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles" that "has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo" (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 25). In the context of Chinese online Comrade stories, this term describes how the body of narratives is constantly interrupted and moved (for example, by censorship regulations that delete *tongzhi* websites), but new stories constantly emerge and are charged with potential to address issues that characterize a rapidly transforming sociopolitical environment to advocate for equity and tolerance in contemporary Chinese society.

⁷¹ China's internet and telecommunications industries are primarily State-owned, where the Chinese government controls or heavily regulates the majority of large companies in those economic sectors.

production of online Comrade stories is a critical phenomenon – both textual and social – constituting part of the process through which Chinese citizens mold a part of their sexual identity and voice resistance in an inhibited society.

[Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research]

Given the participatory and interactive nature of online literature, it will be interesting to acquire information about why and how authors write *tongzhi* stories. The experiences of Comrade netizens when reading specific stories will more specifically address the interaction between creators and consumers of *tongzhi* texts. To better understand how the online reading format differs from traditional printed literature, interdisciplinary research on this topic drawing upon both ethnographic and literary methodologies is necessary. The multimedia nature of cyber text and how it influences readers of *tongzhi* stories also requires more attention. On *tongzhi* websites, texts are often framed by a combination of sounds and images, reconceptualizing the literary aesthetic of these online stories to include new visual and aural components.⁷² The incorporation of multimedia technology is a dynamic development for online Comrade literature, and future research should evaluate this new media platform.

As China's digital landscape is marked by ever more readers accessing novels through smartphones and tablets rather than desktop computers, microblog stories have become a popular format for online Comrade fiction (Juniatop 2010; C.S.M. 2013). In presenting narratives using less than 140 characters, microblog stories deploy mobile technologies to transmit brief, fragmentary experiences of gay intimacy.⁷³ These stories capitalize on mobility discourses to enhance a synchronized sense of imagined community where people are reading and following

⁷² Refer to Appendix III for some screenshots of *tongzhi* websites.

⁷³ See Appendix VI for the Chinese texts of example Comrade microblog stories.

the same stories at the same time (often down to the very same minute). An analysis of these stories may provide insights into the creation of an alternative public text culture that is integral to the construction of *tongzhi* social identities in China.

A key limitation to consider is that this thesis only examined texts from three sub-genres within the male variant of Chinese Comrade Literature. A critical analysis of more *tongzhi* fiction genres would further illuminate how the literature relates to a broader range Chinese society on a diversity of issues. One such sub-genre would be stories that constitute a form of slash fan fiction where Comrade writers queer popular TV dramas or other serial fictions.⁷⁴ Moreover, non-gay male Comrade stories, particularly female *tongzhi* or lala stories, should also be given critical attention. This thesis was also limited by inadequate data on how much collective action, social mobilization, or public perceptions are influenced by Comrade stories. This is an avenue for future ethnographic research, where more information can be collected on the interaction between *tongzhi* writers, readers, and activists, as well as the extent to which Comrade narratives influence public opinion. Such data will be useful to determine the importance or shortcomings of online textual storytelling versus other methods of communication, such as films.

When Chinese citizens turn to the internet to voice resistance against the Party-State's authoritarian regime, this "resistance discourse" relies on a dynamic mode of alternative political cant deploying innovative images, narrative frames, and metaphors to force an opening for free expression in Chinese civil society (House 2011; Jian 2009). Despite stifling online speech

⁷⁴ For example, numerous *tongzhi* stories based on the popular Chinese TV drama, *Scarlett Heart* 《步步惊心》 (*bubu jingxin*), have recently emerged on Comrade websites. The series is based on Tong Hua's (桐华) novel of the same title, and tells the story a young woman who suffers a fatal accident in the 21st century and is sent back in time to the Qing Dynasty. She then has romantic encounters with various princes. Comrade stories based on this TV drama queer relationships between main characters, writing homoerotic tensions into the original heterosexual romance plot.

restrictions, Chinese netizens have adopted coded language to avoid outright censorship while continuing to ridicule and criticize government action (Chen 2012; Qiang 2010). Popular expressions generally take the form of political satire, and sexual undertones are common (CDT 2013; Qiang 2010).⁷⁵ An array of terms that reflect particular circumstances for *tongzhi* in contemporary China are frequently used in forums, chat conversations, and stories (Berry *et al.* 2003; Kam 2013).⁷⁶ Past research has consistently established the importance of language to the expression of social identity (e.g.: Anderson 1983; Queen 1997; Wong 2001), and recent studies have also investigated the significance of online jargon to the creation of virtual communities (e.g.: Boellstorff 2008; He 2008; Smith and Kollock 1999). As such, investigating the role of online and community-specific terminology in the construction of the *tongzhi* subculture would be productive for future research.

[Future Developments for Comrade Literature and Community: Personal Perspectives]

Access to online *tongzhi* stories facilitates greater awareness of homosexuality and engagement with the gay Chinese subculture amongst Chinese netizens. During discussions with Beijing university students about *tongzhi* literature, the four most frequent reasons provided for reading Comrade fiction are:

- 1) the desire to learn more about sexual experiences,

⁷⁵ For example, the “Grass-Mud Horse” (草泥马 *caonima*) is widely used by Chinese netizens as a form of symbolic defiance of internet censorship in China. It is a pun on the obscene Mandarin phrase, 操你妈 (*caonima*), which literally translates as “f* your mother.” In 2009, renowned artist Ai Weiwei published an image of himself nude with only a grass-mud horse plush toy covering his genitals, with the caption “草泥马挡中央” (*caonima dang zhongyang*),” literally meaning “Grass-Mud Horse covering the center.” However, another obvious interpretation of the caption is: “f* your mother, Communist Party Central Committee.” As such, sexual politics and human rights activism is closely intertwined in contemporary Chinese cultural production (CDT 2013; Chen 2012). For more information about the “Grass-Mud Horse” or other subversive political terms created and used by Chinese netizens, see: http://chinadigitaltimes.net/space/Grass-Mud_Horse_Lexicon.

⁷⁶ Appendix VII lists some of these terms.

- 2) to understand how others see love and homosexuality,
- 3) curiosity about the subjective experience of being *tongzhi*, and
- 4) the vicarious thrill of deviating from the norm (“Notes” 2012).

These responses are consistent with academic research on readers of male same-sex fiction more generally as well (Huang 2012; Levi *et al.* 2008).

However, homosexuals in China still fear social condemnation and possible political ramifications. As Liu Kang, a 23-year-old university student active in the Beijing *tongzhi* underground scene confided:

I have no desire to come out or make my gay inclinations public knowledge. I have seen other people suffer discrimination from their peers and employers for being homosexual, and I do not want to risk that... Even if I don't mind whether people look down on me, and even if my parents eventually accept my homosexuality because they love me, people will mock (嘲笑) them. I can't put my parents through that shame... It would be great if China could be more tolerant like in the West, but ... I think it will take a long time before people's attitudes will fully change, especially the older generation. However, my generation is ... more open-minded. So, I still believe that there will be change as long as education and information is available (Liu 2012).

Many *tongzhi* anticipate an uncertain future, where despite Chinese society's increasing receptiveness towards gays, homosexuality will not be officially accepted anytime soon.

Although a number of *tongzhi* are aware of a national 2009 survey that revealed how 60% of the Chinese population indicated that they would accept homosexuality as “natural” (Chen 2011), many are skeptical. The major obstacle they cite is that homosexuality is still seen as “unhealthy,” a view closely tied to the Chinese government's perception that non-normative behaviors threaten its moral leadership (“Notes” 2012). In this manner, the Chinese Party-State's ostensible tolerance still demands political subservience.

Nevertheless, people express hope that, in line with China's rapid socioeconomic development and absorption of Western influences, homosexuality in China will ultimately gain acceptance along the trajectory that it is accepted on a global level ("Notes" 2012). As 20-year-old Peter Lee mentioned:

I hope that people will gradually come to understand homosexuality; to understand us as regular people. I believe that with the rapid rate of social and economic development in China, ... same-sex love will become acceptable in China when it becomes acceptable in the West. All *tongzhi* realize that on some level, the government is the reason why gay love is currently socially unaccepted. It will be very progressive for the Chinese State to allow for homosexuality, and they don't lose much political power [over making such a policy change]... So, it is probably just a matter of time (Lee 2012).

A recurring lament within the Chinese homosexual community and at the LGBT Center in Beijing concerns the inability to organize because of political repression, resulting in dependency on the internet. As Steven Li, a volunteer at the Beijing LGBT Center, remarks: "We organize and alert our supporters to upcoming activities and events through email. We find new recruits and new members ... through the internet. Without the internet, most *tongzhi* activity would cease to exist" (2012). Moreover, it is difficult to provide LGBT services at a local level, as there are few homegrown Chinese people who are already "out" or "willing to work in a *tongzhi* organization at risk of disclosing sexual orientation" (Li 2012). As such, it seems that the current status quo with regard to the *tongzhi* situation in China is unlikely to change in the near-future. Regardless, the role of online Comrade stories and the Chinese internet to communicate information, influence attitudes towards homosexuality, and establish a *tongzhi* community is significant.

[Final Reflections: Online Comrade Literature and Sexual Liberalization in Modern China]

Academics have remarked that descriptions of social change in China are often associated with the metaphor of revolution. Gary Sigley, scholar on contemporary Chinese studies, holds that “China is in the throes of a new and very modern revolution, in the form of its own belated ‘sexual revolution’” (2006, 43). In this view, the *tongzhi* revolution will represent “a moment when Chinese citizens, especially the younger generation, embrace the ‘progressive’ sexual mores of the modern” and increasingly Westernized world (Sigley 2006, 43; Burger 2012). Another popular perspective contends that socioeconomic development demands political liberalization, arguing that visible signs of sexual liberalization can be read in parallel to political liberalization (Braverman 2002). Just as political liberalization implies enhanced political autonomy for citizens, so too does sexual liberalization presuppose that individuals will gain greater scope to conduct their sexual lives according to personal desires (Li 2009; Burger 2012). For both of these views, it is significant that changes in Chinese literary trends have long been a driving force behind political movements in modern China (Lugg 2011; Wang 2004).⁷⁷ Scholars have noted that mainland writers continually find opportunities to produce significant work despite the numerous political interventions that have plagued Chinese literature since 1949 (Wang 2000; Zhang 2007). In this sense, the relative freedom of publishing online makes it an attractive site for political resistance and social commentary (Farrar 2009).

Thus, the ability of both State and society to respond to a changing *tongzhi* subculture will stand as a measure of how freedom and autonomy are to be practiced in twenty-first century China. Online Comrade literature reveals the private lives of homosexuals for public

⁷⁷ In particular, commercial literature was an integral part of the New Culture Movement of the 1920s and has seen resurgence during the post-Maoist economic reforms and New Era (*xin shiqi*) of the 1980s to the Post-New Era (*hou xin shiqi*) of the 1990s and since (Lugg 2011; Wang 2004).

consumption, but rather than merely treating gays as objects of voyeurism, these fiction pose an intellectual challenge to inequities in contemporary Chinese society. The male subjectivities in Comrade stories simultaneously reaffirm yet undermine conservative norms of gender and sexuality, renegotiating the boundary between heterosexual and homosexual behaviors. The literature advances a *tongzhi* identity that is at once integrated into but also distinguished from mainstream Chinese society and popular culture. This development raises critical questions about the implications a new Comrade culture might have on emergent forms of nationalism in modern China. Is there a uniquely Chinese way to be *tongzhi* that is not dependent on Western definitions of gay or queer sexualities? How does the *tongzhi* identity challenge hegemonic notions of “queer” contingent on the softening of Chinese State power?

Incidentally, the fate of the 5th Beijing Queer Film Festival in 2011 provides an interesting footnote to the current state of affairs for the *tongzhi* community and activism in China. The organizers decided to host the festival at a book club in downtown Beijing to make the event more accessible, but planned not to announce the venue until the last minute to decrease risk of a premature shutdown. Nonetheless, three days before the festival’s start, district police and Bureau officers showed up at the book club ordering that the festival was “illegal” and had to be cancelled. The book club was also threatened with “harsh consequences” if it decided to continue hosting the festival (Tan 2011). Until today, the organizers do not know how government authorities found out about the event location. Although the organizers made public statements indicating that the festival was indeed cancelled, they deployed guerilla-style tactics to host a series of underground screenings at different venues instead (Tan

2011). In response to police harassment, Yangyang, one of festival's organizers, tellingly commented that:

Our biggest enemy consists of a small number of authoritarian organizations that are using the powerful national propaganda machine to subtly construct mainstream ideology. And our biggest worth, our ultimate goal in presenting queer content ... is to challenge and oppose this mainstream ideology for the people of China... The revolution hasn't succeeded yet. *Tongzhi*, keep up the good work (qtd. in Tan 2011)!

By reiterating the Chinese nationalist motto from which the name “*tongzhi*” spawned, Yangyang's rejoinder indicates how the queer Chinese movement is closely aligned with a broader sociopolitical protest against the Communist Party-State.

Small signs reveal that attitudes towards homosexuality within official Chinese circles may be changing. Specifically, the State-run English-language newspaper China Daily has released a number of positive articles on LGBT issues in recent years. These range from an editorial on the inaugural 2009 Shanghai Pride parade to the first unofficial gay male marriage in 2010 at a Chengdu bar and the 2012 lifting of a ban on lesbian blood donation (Qian 2009; Huang and Zhang 2010; Yang 2012).⁷⁸ However, the structure of sexuality, gender, and identity in China today are still subject to social control and a patriarchal society (Bao 2011). The dilemma where Chinese gays simultaneously grapple to better understand yet actively conceal any association with homosexuality is a theme that haunts many Comrade stories. *Tongzhi* in China face a twofold quandary: in the public sphere, homosexuality is forcibly suppressed by the authoritarian government's social control over sexual practices; in the

⁷⁸ Although the 4th annual Shanghai Pride in June 2012 was relatively successful and attracted a large corpus of media coverage, the parade's relevance to the *tongzhi* subculture remains contested. The weeklong schedule of events primarily catered to and was attended by Westerners in Shanghai, or relatively Westernized Asian gays. Local *tongzhi* generally agree that the festival raises awareness about LGBT rights, but most do not participate. For more information about Shanghai Pride, see: <http://www.shpride.com>.

private sphere, *tongzhi* are unable to fully express themselves due to pressures coercing them to actively self-censor and conceal their homosexuality.

Across temporal and transnational borders, art and the imagination inspires people look through and beyond what are defined as “normal” and “ideal” to inscribe a space for behaviors and positions to emerge (Bacon *et al.* 1999). Storytelling through online Comrade Literature disputes dominant ideologies about gender and sexuality, replacing them with a diversity of homegrown perspectives.⁷⁹ In the final analysis, all Comrade stories tell variants of the same tale: the story of a *tongzhi* individual’s maturation and self-discovery as he negotiates modern China’s State-enforced sexual paradigm. The Comrade texts analyzed in this thesis – together with countless other stories – inform *tongzhi* readers that people do imagine something other than the status quo, and they struggle in different ways to attain and validate that difference through literature. Ultimately, the important issue is if *tongzhi* passively accept and live by the ideological fiction they are given, or if they are able to influence changes in their real world experiences through active resistance. In this way, Comrade readers use texts and Comrade texts use readers in an online process that aims to establish the presence of an offline *tongzhi* community, potentially effecting real social and political change.

⁷⁹ The key point to emphasize here is that these viewpoints and perspectives arise from within China, rather than from Western sources or an international organization.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

“BoySky Homepage.” 2012. *Boysky*. Accessed on November 8. <http://www.boysky.com>.

“Discussion1.” 2012. *Tongzhi Book Club Discussion 1*. Lao Chang Pian Cafe, Beijing, China.

Attended on: 8 Aug. 2012. Event.

“Newsletter on Love and Knowledge” 《爱知简报》. 1997. Issue 9. Accessed September 22, 2012. <http://www.aizhi.org/book/book123.html>.

“Notes.” 2012. “Field Notes on Research in Beijing, China in August 2012.” Personal Notes.

“Survey.” 2012. “Survey of readers of *tongzhi* stories on BoySky, Danlan, and TT1069.”

Conducted on 10 Sept. 2012. Online postings.

“The Illusive Mind” 《迷思》. 2001. Accessed April 22 2012.

<http://www.boysky.com/viewnews-34558.html>.

Abbott, Jason P. 2004. *The Political Economy of the Internet in Asia and the Pacific Digital Divides, Economic Competitiveness, and Security Challenges*. New York: Praeger.

Alexander, Jeffry C., and Smith, Phillip. 1993. “The Discourse of American Civil Society: A New Proposal for Cultural Studies.” *Theory and Society* 22: 151-207.

Anderson, Benedict R. 1983 [1991]. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London and New York: Verso.

Anderson, Marston. 1990. *The Limits of Realism: Chinese Fiction in the Revolutionary Period*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Beijing Comrade. 1996. “Beijing Story” 《北京故事》. Accessed March 27, 2012.

<http://www.shuku.net:8082/novels/beijing/beijing.html>.

- Bacon, Barbara Schaffer, Cheryl L. Yuen, and Pam Korza. 1999. *Animating Democracy: The Artistic Imagination as a Force in Civic Dialogue*. Washington, DC: Americans for the Arts.
- Bai, Xianyong. 1983 [1990]. *Crystal Boys* 《孽子》. Translated by Howard Goldblatt. San Francisco: Gay Sunshine.
- Bao, Hongwei. 2011. “‘Queer Comrades’: Transnational Popular Culture, Queer Sociality, and Socialist Legacy.” *English Language Notes* 49(1): 131-49.
- Beiner, Ronald. 1995. *Theorizing Citizenship*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Berry, Chris, Fran Martin, and Audrey Yue. 2003. *Mobile Cultures: New Media in Queer Asia*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Berry, Chris. 1996. “East Palace, West Palace: Beijing Begins to Come Out.” *Outrage* 136: 38-40.
- Brandt, Loren and Thomas G. Rawski. 2008. *China's Great Transformation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bragg, Billy. 1988. “Tender Comrade.” *Workers Playtime*. London: Elektra Records.
- Braverman, Amy. 2002. “Open-door sexuality.” *The University of Chicago Magazine* 95(October): 20-21.
- Brown, Gavin. 2008. “Urban (Homo)Sexualities: Ordinary Cities and Ordinary Sexualities.” *Geography Compass* 2(4): 1215-1231.
- Bullough, Vern L. and Fangfu Ruan. 1989. “Sex repression in contemporary China.” In *Building a World Community: Humanism in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Paul Kurtz, 198-201. New York: Prometheus Books.
- Butler, Judith. 2004a. *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge.

- . 2004b. "Imitation and gender insubordination," In *The Judith Butler Reader*, edited by Sarah Salih, 119-137. Oxford: Blackwell.
- . 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- . 1993. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York: Routledge.
- . 1988. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 40(4): 519-531.
- Burger, Robert. 2010. *Behind the Red Door: Sex in China*. Hong Kong: Earnshaw Books.
- Cao, Yu. 2000. "A Consideration of Laws on Homosexuality in China [关于同性恋问题的立法思考]." *Juvenile Delinquency* 6: 30-33. Accessed on September 8, 2012.
<http://www.cqvip.com/QK/82355X/200006/4894701.html>.
- Carlson, Aubrey. 2010. "Chinese LGBT NGOs Face Challenges." *Wikileaks*. Cable Reference ID: #10Beijing109, (January 15). Accessed on November 15, 2012.
<http://wikileaks.org/cable/2010/01/10BEIJING109.html>.
- Chang, Hsiao-hung and Chih-hung Wang. 1995. "Mapping Taipei's Landscape of Desire: Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization of the Family/Park." In *Focus on Taipei Through Cinema 1950-1990*, edited by Ru-Shou Robert Chen and Gene-Fon Liao, 115-25. Taipei: Wanxiang.
- Chang, Sung-sheng Yvonne. 1993. *Modernism and the Nativist Resistance: Contemporary Chinese Fiction from Taiwan*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Chen, Charmaine. 2012. "Beyond 'The Great Firewall': A Closer Look at Online Public Discourse in the People's Republic of China." *MA Thesis*. Wesleyan University.
- Chen, Guoqiu. 1984. "Discussing Lowers in the Mirror and the Moon in Water: an Investigation of a Poetic Metaphor [论镜花水月: 一个诗论象喻的考析]." In *Jinghua Shuiyue: Wenxue Lilun Piping Lunwen Ji*, 1-12. Taipei, Taiwan: Dongda Tushu Gongsì.

- Chen, Jue. 2004. "The Mystery of an 'Ancient Mirror': An Interpretation of *Gujing ji* in the Context of Medieval Chinese Cultural History." Institute of Advanced Studies at the Australian National University. *East Asian History*. 27(June): 33-50.
- Chen, King C. 1987. *China's War with Vietnam, 1979: Issues, Decisions, and Implications*. Palo Alto: Hoover Institution Stanford University, Hoover Press Publication.
- Chen, Wei. 2011. "Discussing China's Legal Protection of Homosexuals Right to Live Together [论我国同性同居者权益的法律保护]." *MA Thesis*. Hua Qiao University.
- Chen, Xiaoming. 2002. "Community and Policing Strategies: A Chinese Approach to Crime Control." *Policing and Society* 12(1): 1-13.
- Cheng, Hao. 1934. *The Sexual Life of Mankind* 《人类的生活》. Shanghai: Yadong Shuju.
- Cheng, Huaqing. 2004. "Different Country Campuses, Same-Sex Love [异国校园，同性之爱]." *The Undergrad* (July 1). Accessed October 20, 2012.
<http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2004-07-01/13193576892.shtml>.
- Chen, Ruoxi. 1986. *Paper Marriage* 《纸婚》. Taipei: Zili.
- China Digital Times (CDT). 2013. "Grass-Mud Horse Lexicon." *China Digital Times*. Accessed February 18, 2013. http://chinadigitaltimes.net/space/Grass-Mud_Horse_Lexicon.
- Chi, Ta-wei. 2002. "New Park: Gay Literature in Taiwan." *International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) Newsletter*. Issue 29. Accessed on February 8, 2013.
http://www.iias.nl/iiasn/29/IIASNL29_12_Tawei.pdf.
- China Internet Network Information Centre (CINIC). 2008. *Statistical survey report on the Internet development in China: Abridged edition*. Accessed on March 6, 2013.
<http://www.cnnic.net.cn/download/2008/CNNIC22threport-en.pdf>.

- Chiang, Howard. 2010. Epistemic Modernity and the Emergence of Homosexuality in China. *Gender and History* 22(3): 629-657.
- Ching, Yao. 2010. *As Normal As Possible: Negotiating Sexuality and Gender in Mainland China and Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Chou, Wah-shan. 2001. "Homosexuality and the Cultural Politics of Tongzhi in Chinese Societies." *Journal of Homosexuality* 40(3-4): 27-46.
- . 2000. *Tongzhi: Politics of Same-Sex Eroticism in Chinese Societies*. New York: The Haworth Press, Inc.
- . 1997. *Post-Colonial Tongzhi*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Tongzhi Press.
- . 1996. *Beijing Tongzhi Stories* 《北京同志故事》. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Tongzhi Study Press.
- Chow, Rey. 1991. "Violence in the Other Country: China as Crisis, Spectacle, and Woman." In *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, edited by Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres, 81-100. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Chu, Judy Y. 2004. "A relational perspective on adolescent boy's identity development." In *Adolescent boys: Exploring diverse cultures of boyhood*, edited by Niobe Way and Judy Y. Chu, 78-106. New York: New York University Press.
- Chu, Wei-cheng Raymond. 1997. "Some Ethnic Gays Are Coming Home. Or, The Trouble With Interraciality." *Textual Practice* 11(2): 219-35.
- Cristini, Remi. 2005. "The Rise of Comrade Literature: Development and Significance of a New Chinese genre." *MA Thesis*. Leiden University.
- Cui, Zien. 2008. *Queer China* 《志同志》. Beijing: dGenerate Films.
- Davis, Sara. 2005. "Restrictions on AIDS Activists in China." *Human Rights Watch* 17(5): 1-57.

- Deleuze, G. and Félix G. 1980. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Trans. Brian Massumi. London and New York: Continuum.
- Diamond, Milton. 1999. "The Effects of Pornography: An International Perspective." In *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*. 22(1):1-22.
- DikÖtter, Frank. 1992. "Review of Bret Hinsch 'Passions of the cut sleeve: the male homosexual tradition in China.'" *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 55: 170.
- Eng, David L. 2001. *Racial Castration*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Engbreetsen, Elizabeth L. 2008. "Queer ethnography in theory and practice: Reflections on studying sexual globalization and women's queer activism in Beijing." *Graduate Journal of Social Science* 5(2): 89-116.
- Fang, Gang. 1995. *Homosexuality in China* 《同性恋在中国》. Changchun, Jilin People's Press.
- Farr, Kathryn. 2007. "Globalization and sexuality." In *The Blackwell Companion to Globalization*, edited by George Ritzer and Kathryn Farr, 610-629. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. doi: 10.1002/9780470691939
- Farrar, Laura. 2009. "For Many Chinese, Literary Dreams Go Online." *CNN*. Digitalbiz. Accessed on March 2, 2013. <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/BUSINESS/02/14/china.publishing>.
- Farrer, James. 2002. *Opening Up: Youth Sex Culture and Market Reform in Shanghai*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Farrer, James. 2006. "Sexual citizenship and the politics of sexual story-telling among Chinese youth." In *Sex and Sexuality in China*, edited by Elaine Jeffreys, 103-123. New York: Routledge.

- Fletcher, Owen. 2008. China Demands New PCs Have Website-blocking Program. *IDG News Service*. Accessed on April 23, 2012.
<http://www.pcworld.com/article/166280/article.html>.
- Fisher, Robert D. 2010. *China's Military Modernization: Building for Regional and Global Reach*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Security Studies.
- French, Howard W. 2010. "Visibility of Gay People Reflects Changes in China." *The New York Times*. Accessed on January 22, 2013.
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/31/world/asia/31iht-letter.html?_r=0.
- Foucault, Michel. 1976 [1990]. *The History of Sexuality, Vol 1: An Introduction*. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, Michel. 1981 [1997]. "Friendship as a Way of Life." In *The Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, Volume One - Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, edited by Paul Rabinow, translated by Robert Hurley, 135-140. New York: The New Press.
- Furth, Charlotte. 1991. "Review of *Passions of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China* by Bret Hinsch." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 50(4): 911-912.
- . 1988 [1993]. "Androgynous Males and Deficient Females: Biology and Gender Boundaries in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century China." In *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, edited by Henry Abelove, Michele Aina, and David M. Halperin, 1-31. New York: Routledge.
- Gao, Fang. 2001. "A complete record of homosexuality in China [中国同性恋全记录]." Accessed on March 28, 2012. <http://heritage.news.tom.com/Archive/2001/7.39053958>.
- Gittings, John. 1964. "The 'Learn from the Army' Campaign," *The China Quarterly* 18(Apr-Jun): 153-159.

- Godwin, John. 2010. *Legal environments, human rights and HIV responses among men who have sex with men and transgender people in Asia and the Pacific: an agenda for action*. Bangkok: United Nations Development Programme (July). Accessed on October 25, 2012. <http://www.snap-undp.org/elibrary/Publication.aspx?ID=629>.
- Gong, Guo. 2003. "Strengthen China's Legal System in Relation to Homosexuality [加强我国的同性恋法制建设]." *China.org.cn*. Accessed on September 28, 2012. http://www.china.org.cn/shownews.asp?news_id+335.
- Gong, Hui. 2009. "Considerations Regarding Legal Protection for Chinese Homosexuals [中国同性恋者法律保护的思考]." *Journal of Handan Polytechnic College* 22(3): 14-16. http://d.wanfangdata.com.cn/periodical_hdzyjsxyxb200903004.aspx.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. 1989. *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists*. New South Wales: Allen and Unwin.
- Guo, Liang. 2003. "Surveying Internet Usage and Impact in Twelve Chinese Cities," The CASS Internet Report 2003. *Beijing: CASS Research Center for Social Development*. Accessed on February 18, 2013. http://www.markle.org/news/parts.4_to_7.pdf
- Han, Sam. 2011. *Web 2.0*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Hayles, N. Katherine. 2002. *Writing Machines*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- He, Terri Chih-yin. 2008. "Enacting Privacy and Everydayness Online: The Case Study of the Spiteful Tots Community." *MA Thesis*, University of York.
- Higgins, Charlotte. 2009. "'Chinese Brokeback Mountain' filmed in secret to beat ban." *The Guardian*. Accessed on November 08, 2012. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2009/may/15/cannesfilmfestival>.
- Hinsch, Bret. 1990. *Passions of the Cut Sleeve: the Male Homosexual Tradition in China*. San Francisco: University of California Berkeley.

- Ho, Loretta. 2010. *Gay and lesbian subculture in urban China*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Hong, Calvin. 2012. "Interview with Local *Tongzhi* #5, Age 24." Personal interview. Conducted on August 23, 2012.
- House, Joseph. 2011. "Internet Censorship in China." *PhD diss.*, The American University. ProQuest (UMI: 1249851343).
- Hu, Fayun. 2006 [2011]. *Such is This World@sars.come* 《如焉@sars.come》. Beijing: Guoji Guangbo. Translated by A.E. Clark. New York: Ragged Banner Press.
- Hua, Jin Ma. 1985. "Homosexuality: an unsolved riddle [同性恋: 一个未解之谜]." *Wishing You Health* 《祝你健康》. Issue 3. Beijing: Aizhi. Accessed April 22, 2012. <http://www.chinesetoday.com/big/article/621036>.
- Huang, Hans Tao-Ming. 1996. "Be(com)ing Gay: Sexual Dissidence and Cultural Change in Contemporary Taiwan." *MA thesis*, Sussex University.
- Huang, Hans Tao-Ming. 2010. "From Glass Clique to Tongzhi Nation: Crystal Boys, Identity Formation and Politics of Sexual Shame." *Positions* 18(2): 373-398.
- Huang, Hans Tao-Ming. 2011. *Queer Politics and Sexual Modernity in Taiwan*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Huang, Martin W. 2001. *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center.
- Huang, Pengli. 2010. "A Search for Fun, Love, or Equality: Boys' Love Fiction and Fans in China." *MA Thesis*, University of Texas at Austin.
- Huang, Ying Ying (黄盈盈). 2009. *Sexuality, Researching: Research on Sexuality in China* 《性, 研究ing: 中国 sexuality 研究》. Taipei: WanYou Publishing House.

- Huang, Zhiling and Zhang Ao. 2010. "In a 'first,' gay couple tie the knot in China." *China Daily*. Accessed on November 10, 2012. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-01/13/content_9310315.htm.
- Humana, Charles and Wang Wu. 1984. *Chinese Sex Secrets: A look behind the screen*. New York: Gallery Books.
- International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC). 1999. "China: Status of Sexual Minorities." *Asylumlaw.org*. Accessed on October 20, 2012. [http://www.asylumlaw.org/docs/sexualminorities/China%202%20SO%20\[93-99\].pdf](http://www.asylumlaw.org/docs/sexualminorities/China%202%20SO%20[93-99].pdf).
- Internet Society of China (ISC). 2004. "Regulations on Banning the Transmission of Pornography and Obscene Information Online [互联网站禁止传播淫秽、色情等不良信息自律规范]." Accessed on October 20, 2012. <http://www.isc.org.cn/ShowArticle.php?id=6486>.
- Internet World Stats (IWS). 2012. "Usage and Population Statistics: China." *Internet World Stats*. Accessed on April 15, 2012. <http://www.internetworldstats.com>.
- Jackson, Peter A. and Gerard Sullivan. 2001. *Gay and Lesbian Asia: Culture, Identity, Community*. New York: The Haworth Press.
- Jian, Deng. 2009. "Ten Emotional Years with the Internet [十年网络十年情]." *China Digital Times*. Accessed on November 08, 2012. <http://chinadigitaltimes.net/Chinese/2009/01>.
- Jian, Jiabin. 1997. "Coming-out Politics in Writing: Changes in the battlefields of *tongzhi* writing in the 1990s [书写中的现身政治—九零年代同志演说战场的流变]." *United Literature* 148: 66-79.

- Jiang, Hui. 2005. "ICCGL: Cultural Communication via the Internet and GLBT Community Building in China." The First International Conference of Asian Queer Studies, July 10-11. Bangkok: University of Bangkok.
- Jiang, Jessie. 2011. "Beijing Gay Community Fights Censorship." *Time*. Accessed on April 22, 2012. <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2080443,00.html>.
- Jungkunz, Vincent. 2008. "Insubordinate Silence." *PhD Diss.*, Ohio University. ProQuest (UMI: 3328412).
- Juniatop. 2010. "Gay Novels Went Popular in The First Microblog Novel Contest in China." *Bukisa*. Accessed on April 22, 2012. http://www.bukisa.com/articles/403440_gay-novels-went-popular-in-the-first-microblog-novel-contest-in-china.
- Kang, Wenqing. 2008. "Dan and Sexuality in Chinese National Modernity." *PhD Diss.*, Cleveland State University.
- Kang, Wenqing. 2009. *Obsession: Male Same-Sex Relations in China, 1900-1950*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Kam, Lucetta Yip Lo. 2013. *Shanghai Lalas: Female Tongzhi Communities and Politics in Urban China*. Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press.
- Ke, Yawen. 2006. "The Mourning, Self-Treatment, and Self-Fulfillment of Contemporary Female *Tongzhi* Literature [當代女同志文學的悼亡、自療與自我完成]." *PhD Diss.*, National Chung Hsing University.
- Kenny, Colum. 2011. *The Power of Silence: Silent Communication in Daily Life*. London: Karnac.
- Kong, Shuyu. 2004. *Consuming Literature: Best Sellers and the Commercialization of Literary Production in Contemporary China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

- Kong, Travis. S. K. 2011. *Chinese Male Homosexualities: Memba, Tongzhi, and Golden Boy*. New York: Routledge.
- Kong, Xiang Xing, and Yiman Liu. 1984. *Bronze Mirrors of Ancient China* [中国古代铜镜]. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe.
- Kristeva, Julia. 1982. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ku, Agnes SM. 1999. *Narratives, Politics, and the Public Sphere*. Brookfield: Ashgate Publishing Company.
- Lacan, Jacques. 1977 [1998]. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Norton.
- . 1954a [1991]. “Freud's Papers on Technique 1953-1954.” Translated by John Forrester. In *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I*, edited by Jacques-Alain Miller. New York: Norton.
- . 1954b [1991]. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II, the Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*. Translated by Sylvana Tomaselli. New York: Norton.
- . 1949. *Ecrits*. Trans. Bruce Fink. 2002. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.
- Levi, Antonia, Mark McHarry, and Dru Pagliassotti, eds. 2008. *Boys' Love Manga: Essays on the Sexual Ambiguity and Cross-Cultural Fandom of the Genre*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co.
- Lao Ou. 2011. *Those Tongzhi Children of Mine* 《我的那些同志孩儿》. Shanghai: Shanghai San Lian Publishing House.
- Lau, M.P. and M.L. Ng. 1989. “Homosexuality in Chinese Culture.” *Culture, medicine and psychiatry* 13(4): 465-488.

- Lee, Peter. 2012. "Interview with Local *Tongzhi* #1, Age 20." Personal interview. Conducted on Aug 9, 2012.
- Li, Hongyan. 2012. "LGBT in China and their vulnerability to HIV." *UNESCO Beijing*. Accessed on January 20, 2013. <http://www.unescobej.org/education/resources/news-and-event/2012/lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-in-china-and-their-vulnerability-to-hiv>.
- Li, Lingling. 2001. *The Full Biography of Mei Lanfang* 《梅蘭芳全傳》. Beijing : Zhongguo qing nian chu ban she.
- Li, Steven. 2012. "Conversation about the LGBT Center." Personal Communication.
- Li, Xi. 2008. "Literature on the Subject of Love Always Walk At the Edge: From gay to DanMei [游走于边缘爱情的文学主题:从同志到耽美]." *MA Thesis*, DongBei Normal University.
- Li, Yinhe. 2008. *Concerning the Conversation on Love Emotions* 《关于情感的对话》. Wuhan Shi: Wuhan Chu Ban She. Print.
- . 2006. "Regulating Male Same-Sex Relationships." In *Sex and Sexuality in China*, edited by Elaine Jeffreys, 82-101. New York: Routledge.
- . 1998. *Subculture of Homosexuality* 《同性恋亚文化》. Beijing: China Today Publishing House.
- Li, Yinhe and Wang Xiaobo. (李银河/王小波). 1993. *Their World* (《他们的世界:中国男同性恋群落透视》). Shanxi: Shanxi Peoples Publishing House (山西人民出版社).
- Li, Yongjun. 2009. *Sexual Rights and Law* 《性权利与法律》. Beijing: Science Studies Publishing House.
- Litt, Carole J. 1986. "Theories of Transitional Object Attachment: An Overview." *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 9: 383-99.

- Liu, Dalian. 2009. *Sex Social Science: Human Behavior* 《性社会学—人类行为》. Inner Mongolia: Inner Mongolia University Press. Print.
- . 2005. *Studies on Homosexuality in China* 《中国同性恋研究》. China Social Sciences Press.
- Liu, Kang. 2012. "Interview with Local *Tongzhi* #2, Age 23." Personal interview. Conducted on August 10, 2012.
- Liu, Petrus and Lisa Rofel. 2010. "Beyond the Strai(gh)ts: Transnationalism and Queer Chinese Politics." *positions* 18(2): 281-289.
- Liu, Petrus. 2008. "Paper Marriage and Transnational Queer Politics." *Same-Sex Desire and Union in China: Interdisciplinary and Historical Perspectives Conference*. Stanford Humanities Center: Stanford University.
- . 2010. "Why Does Queer Theory Need China?" *positions* 18(2): 292-320.
- Liu, Zhen. 1987. "Save Homosexuals [拯救同性恋]." *Popular Health News* [大众卫生报].
- Love, Heather. 2007. *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. Boston: Harvard University Press.
- Lu, Xing. 2004. *Rhetoric of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: The Impact on Chinese Thought, Culture, and Communication* (Columbia: University of South Carolina).
- Lu, Yichen and Max Essex, eds. *AIDS in Asia*. New York: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Lugg, Alexander. 2011. "Chinese online fiction: taste publics, entertainment, and *Candle in the Tomb*." *Chinese Journal of Communication* 4(2): 212-136.
- Ma, Ji. 2010. *Perspective and Memo on Internet Literature* 《网络文学透视与备忘》. Beijing: China Social Sciences Publishing House (中国社会科学出版社)

- Ma, Ping. 2011. *Consideration of the Constitutional Law on The Issue of Homosexuality* 《同性
恋问题的宪法学思考》. Beijing: Legal Publishing House 法律出版社.
- Martin, Fran. 2008. *AsiaPacifQueer: Rethinking Genders and Sexualities*. Illinois: University of
Illinois Press.
- . 2003a. *Angelwings: Contemporary Queer Fiction From Taiwan*. Honolulu: University
of Hawai'i Press.
- . 2003b. *Situating Sexualities*. Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press.
- . 1999. "Chen Xue's Queer Tactics." *positions* 7(1): 71-94.
- McDougall, Bonnie S. 2003. *Fictional Authors, Imaginary Audiences: Modern Chinese
Literature in the Twentieth Century*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.
- Mcmillan, Joanna. 2006. *Sex, Science, and Morality in China*. New York: Routledge.
- Meijer, Irene Costera and Beukje Prins. 1998. "How Bodies Come to Matter: An Interview with
Judith Butler." *Signs* 33(2): 275-286.
- Min, Tian. 2000. "Male 'Dan': The Paradox of Sex, Acting, and Perception of Female
Impersonation in Traditional Chinese Theatre." *Asian Theatre Journal* 17(1): 78-97.
- Mountford, Tom. 2010. "The Legal Status and Position of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and
Transgender People in the People's Republic of China." *International Gay and Lesbian
Human Rights Commission*. [http://www.iglhrc.org/cgi-
bin/iowa/article/takeaction/resourcecenter/1107.html](http://www.iglhrc.org/cgi-bin/iowa/article/takeaction/resourcecenter/1107.html).
- C.S.M. 2013. "Chinese Online Literature: Voices in the Wilderness." *The Economist*. Accessed
on March 25 3013. Available at:
<http://www.economist.com/blogs/prospero/2013/03/chinese-online-literature>.
- National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China. 1949. "Rules for the Control of
and Punishments Concerning Public Security." Article 5, para. 7. 81st Session of the

- Standing Committee of the First National People's Congress.
<http://cecc.gov/pages/newLaws/criminalLawENG.php>.
- National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China. 1986. "The State Council's Regulations on Severely Banning Pornography."
- National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China. 2005. "Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Administrative Penalties for Public Security." Article 42, para. 5. *China.org.cn*. Accessed on November 22, 2012.
http://www.china.org.cn/china/LegislationsForm2001-2010/2011-02/11/content_21899252.htm.
- Nealon, Christopher. 2001. *Foundlings: Lesbian and Gay Historical Emotion before Stonewall*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Ng, Vivien. 1989. *Homosexuality and the State in Late Imperial China*. New York: Meridian press.
- Nieland T.B., Steward, W.T. and Choi K.H. 2007." Assessment of Stigma Towards Homosexuality in China: A Study of Men who have Sex with Men." *Archives of Sex Behavior* 27: 838-844.
- O'Brien, J. 2009. "Yin-Yang." *Encyclopedia of gender and society* 2: 927-29.
- Pan, Suiming. 2006. "Homosexuality and Us." In *Sex Revolution in China: Its Origin, Expressions and Evolution* 《中国性革命纵论》, 201-234. Beijing: Wan You Publishing House.
- Penley, Constance. 1992. "Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and Popular Culture." In *Cultural Studies*, edited by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, andn Paula Treichler, 479-500. New York: Routledge.

- Peterson, Willard J. 2002. *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 9, Part 1, The Ch'ing Empire to 1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Powell, Ralph L. 1965. "Commissars in the Economy: 'Learn from the PLA' Movement in China" *Asian Survey* 5(3): 125-138.
- Powers, Martin J. 1991. *Art and Political Expression in Early China*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Qiang, Xiao. 2011. "The Battle for the Chinese Internet." *Journal of Democracy* 22(2):47-61.
- Qiang, Xiao. 2010. "From 'Grass-Mud Horse' to 'Citizen': A New Generation Emerges through China's Social Media Space." *Presentation at the Congressional-Executive Commission on "China's Censorship of the Internet and Social Media: The Human Toll and Trade Impact."* Accessed on September 22, 2012.
<http://www.cecc.gov/pages/hearings/general/hearing1/statement4.pdf>.
- Qing, Feng (青风). 2008. "Commitment" <<承诺>>. Accessed on February 9, 2013.
<http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=353537>.
- Qian, Yanfeng. 2009. "Shanghai hosts first gay pride festival." *China Daily*. Accessed on September 22, 2012. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-06/10/content_8265878.htm.
- Qiu, Rencong. 1997. *Aids, Sex, and Discourse* 《艾滋病、性和伦理学》. Beijing: Capital University Publishing House.
- Queen, Robin. 1997. "I Don't Speak Spritch: Locating Lesbian Language." In *Queerly Phrased: Language, Gender, and Sexuality*, edited by Anna Livia and Kira Hall, 223-256. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Roach, Tom. 2012. *Friendship as a Way of Life: Foucault, AIDS, and the Politics of Shared Estrangement*. New York: Statue University of New York (SUNY) Press.

- Rofel, Lisa. 2007. *Desiring China: Experiments in Neoliberalism, Sexuality, and Public Culture*. Durham, Duke University Press.
- Rofel, Lisa. 1999. *Other Modernities: Gendered Yearnings in China after Socialism*. Berkeley: University of California.
- Rojas, Carlos. 2000. *Flowers in the Mirror: Vision, Gender, and Reflections on Chinese Modernity*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Rojas, Carlos. 2008. *The Naked Gaze: Reflections on Chinese Modernity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ruan, Fangfu. 1988. Male homosexuality in contemporary mainland China. *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 17(2): 189-199.
- Ruan, Fangfu and Vern L. Bullough. 1992. "Lesbianism in China." *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 21(3), 217-26.
- . 1991. *Sex in China: Studies in Sexology in Chinese culture*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Ruan, Fangfu and Yung-mei Tsai. 1987. "Male homosexuality in the traditional Chinese literature." *Journal of Homosexuality* 14(3-4): 21-33.
- Samshasha. 1984. *History of Homosexuality in China* 《中国同性恋史录》. Hong Kong, Rosa Winkel Press.
- . 1997. *A History of Homosexuality in China, Expanded Edition* 《中国同性恋史录, 增订本》. Hong Kong: Rosa Winkel Press.
- Sanders, Douglas. 2006. "Health and rights: Human rights and intervention programs for males who have sex with males (East Asia)." *Background Paper to Risks and Responsibilities Consultation* Issue 1(September):23-26. New Delhi: APCOM.
- Sang, Deborah. 2003. *The Emerging Lesbian: Female Same-Sex Desire in Modern China*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

- Schell, Orville. 1990. "Introduction." In *Children of the Dragon: The Story of Tiananmen Square*, 11-15. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.
- Scott, A. O. 2002. "Lan Yu: Passion Erupting Amid Political Upheaval." *The New York Times*, July 22. Accessed on April 17, 2012.
<http://movies.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9F02E2DE1138F935A15754C0A9649C8B63>.
- Scotton, Carol M., and Wanjin Zhu. 1983. "Tongzhi in China: Language Change and its Conversational Consequences." *Language in Society* 12: 477-494.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. 1990. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: University of California.
- Shaw, Victor N. 1996. "Resistance and Specific Reactions to Different Forms of Social Control." In *Social Control in China: A Study of Chinese Work Units*, pp.189-206. Westport: Praeger.
- Shiren. 2004. *Confidential Homosexuality in Ancient China* 《中国古代同性恋秘闻》. Hong Kong: Cosmo Books Ltd.
- Sieber, Patricia Angela. 2001. "Introduction." In *Red is Not the Only Color: Contemporary Chinese Fiction on Love and Sex between Women, Collected Stories*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Sieving, Renee E, Maria E Eisenberg, Sandra Pettingell, and Carol Skay. 2006. "Friends' influence on adolescents' first sexual intercourse." *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 38(1): 13-19. Accessed on December 11, 2012.
<http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/3801306.html>.
- Sigley, Gary. 2006. "Sex, Politics and the policing of virtue in the People's Republic of China." In *Sex and Sexuality in China*, edited by Elaine Jeffreys, 43-61. Great Britain: Routledge.

- Simon, Scott. 2001. "Sexuality, Culture and Political Economics: Experiences of Minnan Comrades." In *Queer Research*, edited by Scott Simon, 51-88. Taipei, Chu-liu Publishing.
- Smith, Marc A., and Peter Kollock. 1999. *Communities in Cyberspace*. London: Routledge.
- Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. 1989. "The Body Politic." In *Coming to Terms*, edited by Elizabeth Weed. NY: Routledge.
- Sommers, Matthew. 2000. *Sex, Law, and Society in Late Imperial China*. Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- Spence, Jonathan. 1990. "The Gate and the Square." In *Children of the Dragon: The Story of Tiananmen Square*, edited by Orville Schell, 16-37. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.
- Stone, Charles R. 2003. *The Fountainhead of Chinese Erotica: The Lord of Perfect Satisfaction*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Sullivan, Gerard. 2001. "Variations on a Common Theme? Gay and Lesbian Identity and Community in Asia." *Journal of Homosexuality* 40(3/4): 253-269.
- Szonyi, Michael. 1998. *The Cult of Hu Tianbao and the Eighteenth-Century Discourse of Homosexuality*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Tan, Dazheng. 1998. *Sexual Culture and Law* 《性文化与法》. Shanghai: Shanghai People Publisher (上海人民出版社).
- Tan, Kenneth. 2011. "Police harassment forces Beijing Queer Film Festival to return underground." *Shanghaiist*. Accessed on September 22, 2012.
http://shanghaiist.com/2011/06/22/beijing_queer_film_festival_2011.php#photo-1.

- Van de Werff, Ties. 2010. "The Struggle of the *Tongzhi* Homosexuality in China and the Position of Chinese 'Comrades.'" In *Urgency Required: gay and lesbian rights are human rights*, edited by Dubel and Hielkema, 172-180. The Hague: HIVOS.
- Wan, Yanhai. 2001. "Becoming a Gay Activist in Contemporary China." *Journal of Homosexuality* 40(3-4): 47-64.
- . 2008. "A big gay crackdown in Beijing?" *Shanghaiist*. Shanghai. Accessed on September 22, 2012. http://shanghaiist.com/2008/03/31/a_big_gay_crack.php
- Wang, David Der-wei. 2000. "Introduction." In *Chinese Literature in the Second Half of a Modern Century*, edited by Pang-yuan Chi and David Der-wei Wang, xiii-xliii. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- . 1998. *What About Modernity, What About Literature?: On Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Chinese Novels*. 《如何现代, 怎样文学?: 十九、二十世纪中文小说新论》. Taipei: Maitian.
- Wang Mengsheng. 1972 [1915]. *Anecdotes from the Theatre World* 《梨園佳話》. Taipei: Xuehai Chubanshe.
- Wang, Eugene Yuejin. 1994. "Mirror, Death, and Rhetoric: Reading Later Han Bronze Artifacts." *The Art Bulletin* 76(3): 511-534.
- Wang, Ling. 2005. "The Changes of the Description of Homosexuality in Modern and Contemporary Literature [中国现当代文学史上同性恋书写的变迁]." *PhD Diss.*, DongBei Normal University.
- Wang, Ning. 2004. "Globalizing Chinese Literature: Toward a Rewriting of Contemporary Chinese Literary Culture." *Journal of Contemporary China* 13(8): 53-68.
- Way, Niobe. 2012. "Close friendships among adolescent boys." *Thymos* 6(1): 116-136. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1024823016?accountid=10598>.

- Wen, Xin. 2011. "China's legal protection of the right of homosexual unions [中国同性结合权的法律保护]." *PhD Diss.*, Ji Lin Economics University.
- Williams, C.A.S. 2006. *Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs*. North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing.
- Williams, Walter L. 1994. "Review of *Passions of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China* by Bret Hinsch." *Amerasia Journal* 20(3): 87.
- Wilson, Natalie. 2001. "Butler's Corporeal Politics: Matters of Politicized Abjection." *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies* 6(1/2): 109-21.
- Winnicott, Donald. 1971. "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena." In *Playing and Reality*. London: Tavistock.
- . 1967 [1971]. "The Mirror-role of Mother and Family in Child Development." In *Playing and Reality*. London: Tavistock, 1971.
- Woledge, Elizabeth. 2005. "From Slash to the Mainstream: Female Writers and Gender Blending Men." *Extrapolation* 46, 1(Spring): 50-65.
- Wong, Alvin Ka Hin. 2012. "Queerness and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading Between East and West." *MA Thesis*, University of California, San Diego.
- Wong, Andrew and Qing Zhang. 2000. "The Linguistic Construction of the *Tongzhi* Community." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 10(2): 248-78.
- Wong, Andrew. 2008. "The Trouble with *Tongzhi*: The Politics of Labeling Among Gay and Lesbian Hongkongers." *Pragmatics* 18(2): 277-301.
- Wong, Christopher. 2012. "Interview with Local *Tongzhi* #4, Age 24." Personal interview. Conducted on August 23.
- Wu, Cuncun. 2005. *Homoerotic Sensibilities in Late Imperial China*. London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon.

- Xiaohe (筱禾). 1999. *Huizi 《辉子》*. Accessed on April 7, 2012.
http://www.bookbao.com/view/201102/01/id_XMTQ3MzYy.html.
- Yang, Ruby. 2008. *Tongzhi in Love 《彼岸浮生》*. New York: Thomas Lennon Films.
- Yang, Wanli. 2012. "New Rules for Blood Donors." *China Daily*. Accessed on March 5, 2013.
http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-07/30/content_15629234.htm.
- Yao, Ching, ed. 2010. *As Normal as Possible: Negotiating Sexuality and Gender in Mainland China and Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Yeh, Dexuan (Jonathan Te-hsuan Yeh 叶德宣). 1998. "Go Camping: Gender-Crossing Performances in *Yongyuande Yin Xueyan* and *Niezi* [两种 '露营/淫' 的方法: 《永远的尹雪艳》与《孽子》中的性别越界演出]." *Zhongwai Wenxue 中外文学* 26(12): 67-89.
- Yu, Xiangrong. 2002. "How come the crime of hooliganism still exists in present-day China? [现在中国咋还有流氓罪?]" Accessed on October 20, 2012.
<http://hlj.rednet.cn/c/2002/12/20/380309.htm>.
- Yuan, Liangjun. 1991. *On Bai Xianyong 《白先勇论》*. Taipei: Erya.
- Zeitlin, Judith T. 1997. "Embodying the Disembodied: Representations of Ghosts and the Feminine." In *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, edited by Ellen Widmer and Kang-I Sun Chang, 242-63. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.
- Zhang, Cixi, ed. 1965 [1934]. *Historical Records of the Qing Dynasty Theatre, Volume 3 《清代燕都梨園史料: 正續編》*. Taipei: Taiwan Xuesheng Shuju.
- Zhang, Jie. 2008. *Illustration Book of Homosexuality in Ancient China 《中国古代同性恋图书》*. Yunan: Yunan People's Publishing House.
- Zhang, Xiaoling. 2009. *China's Information and Communications Technology Revolution: Social Changes and State Responses*. London: Routledge.

- Zhang, Yiwu. 2007. "Recent Changes in Contemporary Chinese Literary Trends." *World Literature Today* 81(4): 15-17.
- Zhang, Yongqing, ed. 2003. *Literary Trends in the New Age* 《新时代文学思潮》. Beijing: China Renmin University Press.
- Zhang, Yongqing. 2011. "Special Issue: Online Literature in China: Present Situation and Theoretical Reflections." *Social Sciences in China* XXXII 1(Feb): 182-190.
- Zhang, Zaizhou. 2001. *The Course of Ambiguous Love: Ancient China's Homosexual History* 《暧昧的历程: 中国古代同性恋史》. Zhengzhou: Central Ancient Texts Publishing House.
- Zheng, Yongnian. 2008. *Technological Empowerment: The Internet, State, and Society in China*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP.
- Zhou, Yongming. 2006. *Historicizing Online Politics: Telegraphy, the Internet, and Political Participation in China*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Zhu, Tianwen. 1999. *Notes of a Desolate Man* 《荒人手记》. Translated by Howard Goldblatt. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Zizek, Slavoj. 1989. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London: Verso.

APPENDIX

Appendix I: Selected Legal Documents Used to Detain Homosexuals in the PRC⁸⁰

- a. Hooliganism Law in Official Penal Code
 - 1957: People's Republic of China's Criminal Law Code
 1. The crime of "hooliganism" was abolished in China in 1997 and was replaced by "disrupting public orders," "causing mass anger," "vandalism," "destruction of public or private property"; all punished by prison or death.
- b. In 1984 hooliganism was introduced for the "Strike-Hard" campaign.
 - Sex in public, group sex, rape, or sex with children was affirmed by the government to be transgressions of criminal law.
 - *Source: <http://www.chinahush.com/2011/02/22/chinas-last-hooliganism-convict-should-convict-continue-serving-his-sentence-for-a-repealed-law/>
- c. Homosexuality Classification as Mental Disease
 - 1984: The first edition of China's Psychiatric Association's Classification and Diagnostic Criteria of Mental Disorders (《中国精神障碍分类与诊断标准》第一策) is published and lists "homosexuality" as a form of sexual deviance and a pathological disorder.
- d. Prohibition of Erotic Fiction/Anti-Pornography Laws
 - October 22, 1957: "Rules for the Control of and Punishments Concerning Public Security of the People's Republic of China"
 1. Article 5: A person who commits any of the following acts disrupting public order shall be punished by detention of not more than ten days, a fine of not more than twenty yuan, or a warning:
 7. Putting up...reactionary, obscene or absurd books...or pictures that have previously been repressed.
 - April 1986: "The State Council's Regulations on Severely Banning Pornography"
 1. Pornography is very harmful, poisoning people's minds, inducing crimes...and must be severely banned. The items which must be severely banned include: any kind of...book, newspaper, photograph, painting, magazine, written and hand-copied material which contains explicit descriptions of sexual behavior and/or erotic pictures. The person who produced, sold, or organized the showing of such materials, whether for sale or not, shall be punished according to the conditions, by imprisonment or administrative punishment."
 - *Source: (Fang, 1991, 98-100)
- e. Internet Censorship Laws
 - December 1997: Computer Information Network and Internet Security, Protection, and Management Regulations
 - – Section Five: No unit or individual may use the Internet to create, replicate, retrieve, or transmit the following kinds of information:

⁸⁰ References: Mountford, 2010; Ma, 2011; Fang, 1991.

1. Inciting to resist or breaking the Constitution or laws or the implementation of administrative regulations;
2. Inciting to overthrow the government or the socialist system;
3. Inciting division of the country, harming national unification;
4. Inciting hatred or discrimination among nationalities or harming the unity of the nationalities;
5. Making falsehoods or distorting the truth, spreading rumors, destroying the order of society;
6. Promoting feudal superstitions, sexually suggestive material, gambling, violence, murder;
7. Terrorism or inciting others to criminal activity; openly insulting other people or distorting the truth to slander people;
8. Injuring the reputation of State organizations;
9. Other activities against the Constitution, laws or administrative regulations.

*Source: (Abbott, 2004).

f. September 2000: State Council Order No. 292

1. China-based Web sites shall not link to overseas news Web sites or distribute news from overseas media without separate approval. Only licensed print publishers have the authority to deliver news online. Non-licensed Web sites that wish to broadcast news may only publish information already released publicly by other news media. These sites must obtain approval from State information offices and from the State Council Information Agency.

- *Source: "CECC: Freedom of Expression – Laws and Regulations".
<http://www.cecc.gov/pages/virtualAcad/exp/explaws.php>.

g. Laws Regulating Public Order and Indecency (used indirectly to imprison homosexuals and/or criminalize homosexual behaviors)

- Section 158 of the Penal Code
 1. Punishes “disturbance against the social order” with up to 5 years imprisonment.
- *Source: (INS, 2012)

h. Law of the PRC on Penalties for Administration of Public Security

- Article 68
 1. A person who produces, transports, duplicates, sells or lends pornographic materials including books, periodicals, pictures, movies and audio-video products, or disseminates pornographic information by making use of computer information networks, telephones or other means of communications shall be detained for not less than 10 days but not more than 15 days and may, in addition, be fined not more than 3,000 yuan (US \$470); and if the circumstances are relatively minor, he shall be detained for not more than five days or be fined not more than 500 yuan (\$78).

Appendix II: *Brief Chronology of Political Developments Affecting Male Tongzhi*⁸¹

- 1957: China's government reasserts criminalization of homosexuality in the Penal Code as "hooliganism" ("流氓罪").
- 1981: Zhang Mingyuan of Dazhong Medical School published a controversial essay analyzing homosexual elements in the classical 17th century Chinese novel, *Dream of Red Mansions*, to conclude that homosexuality is a medical phenomenon that requires further research before it can be understood and should not be labeled a mental disorder.
- 1983: The "Strike-Hard" (严打) campaign, was a government crackdown to curb rising crime rates, during which hooliganism was targeted as a capital crime.
- 1984: The first edition of China's Psychiatric Association's Classification and Diagnostic Criteria of Mental Disorders is published and lists "homosexuality" as a form of sexual deviance and a pathological disorder.
- 1986: Professor Zhao Min Yin at Hua Dong Normal University in Shanghai began researching how homosexuality could be cured, but was arrested on unspecified charges 6 times during the course of his research.
- June 4 1989: Tiananmen Square Massacre in Beijing, military troops open fired and violently suppressed peaceful demonstration by university students.
- 1989: China's Police Department makes the statement that the law is ambiguous on charges of homosexuality, and gays should not be convicted under "hooliganism."
- 1990: Lin Yinhe (李银河) and Wang Xiaopo (王小波) conduct interviews to publish *Their World* (《他们的世界》), the first book that compiles case studies of homosexuals in China.
- 1991: Research on homosexuality from the medical sciences is spearheaded by scholars Cheng Lianzhong (陈秉中) and Wan Tinghai (万延海).
- 1994: Zhang Beichuan (张北川) publishes research on *Homosexual Love* (《同性爱》) in which he discusses popular discourse on the psychology of gay relationships.
- June 1995: "China Rainbow" (中国彩虹), a pro-gay organization in Beijing, reports on the repressed homosexual condition in China on international media circuits. This prompts other international media organizations to pay greater attention to the status of homosexuals in China as well, resulting in increased coverage of the community.
- 1995: Fang Gang's publishes a controversial book on *Homosexuality in China*, generating widespread media attention. Events described in the book were later used to convict and imprison Chinese homosexuals involved in gay activism and events.
- 1997: New Legal code removes the "hooliganism" law that had been used to imprison homosexuals. This is seen as a landmark move in China's legal history towards homosexuality.
- 1998: 14 gay and lesbian groups formed the *Tongzhi* Joint Committee, the first officially recognized organization advocating gay rights.

⁸¹ References: Ma, 2011; Cao, 2000; Gong, 2009; Qiu, 1997.

- September 1999: Judge Zhang Lihua residing over Beijing's Xuan Wu District People's Court, declares homosexuality "abnormal and unacceptable to Chinese public." This is a landmark decision and the first time a mainland court officially ruled on nature of homosexuality.
- 2000: An internet survey of 10,792 reveals that Chinese netizens are more tolerant towards gays, with 48.15% in favor of gays to express their homosexuality without discrimination.
- 2000: China arrests 37 gay men as part of nationwide anti-vice campaign in Guangzhou.
- Dec 2000: Liu Kuan Wing-Wah, Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs in China, makes the public statement that government survey results indicates the "majority of Chinese are against gay rights law."
- March 2001: Chinese lawmakers urge life imprisonment for people guilty of spreading AIDS. Beijing National People's Congress submitted joint proposal to make it crime for people (particularly gay prostitutes) to spread AIDS.
- April 2001: The third edition of China's Psychiatric Association's Manual for the Classification of Mental Diseases removes "homosexuality" from its list of pathological disorders, setting the precedent to indicate that homosexuality should not be considered a mental aberration.
- 2003: Shanghai's Fudan University introduces the first university class on gay health issues, focus mainly on AIDS prevention. 2000 students enrolled in the course within 2 years.
- 2003: Golden Shield Project (Great Firewall) for internet censorship implemented
- 2004: Law enforced prohibiting pornographic or obscene information on the internet, including descriptions of homosexual behaviors.
- Dec 2004: First official government survey on China's homosexual population puts gay male community at 5-10 million.
- 2005: Shanghai's Fudan University introduces an unprecedented public class that deals directly with homosexuality and the gay rights movement.
- 2005: The inaugural Homosexual Culture Festival (第一届北京同性恋文化节) is held in Beijing and is the first gay pride event to attract widespread attention, but eventually shut down by the government.
- July 2005: China's government releases official population census results with a survey that indicates the existence of a significant percentage of homosexuals within the population. This is the first time that the government publicly acknowledges the existence of homosexuality as part of the Chinese population.
- August 2010: First gay marriage held at a bar in Chengdu and reported in an editorial in China Daily.
- June 2009: Inaugural Shanghai Pride festival held and reported in editorials on China Daily.
- 2012: Ban forbidding homosexuals from donating blood lifted for lesbians, instigated push on behalf of gay men as well.

Appendix III: Tongzhi Website Screenshots

a. 淡蓝: www.danlan.com.cn



b. 同志交友: www.94gay.com



c. 阳光地带: www.boysky.com

阳光通行证: 用户名: 密码: ☐ 记住我 [登录](#) [注册](#) [找回密码](#) [繁体](#) [English](#)

阳光地带 boysky 新闻 国内 国际 娱乐 站务 文学 原创 精选 军警 耽美 杂文 文评 爱同 照片 视频 同城 社区 真我 时评 报道 校园 时尚 健身 男装 护肤 玩物 资讯 论坛 纪实 访谈 问答 真相 百态 聊天 甘肃 海南 各地 博客 情感 观点 故事 杂谈 影视 外片 国产 视频 影评 图库 东方 西洋 明星 男模 浪漫 军警 公益 故事 小组 动态 微博 圈子 相册 酷儿 导航

[首页](#) [新闻](#) [资讯](#) [文学](#) [时尚](#) [影视](#) [图库](#) [聊天](#) [爱同](#) [博客](#) [公益](#) [社区](#) [微博](#) [酷儿](#) [Eng](#) [购物](#)

热门搜索: 帅哥 小说 同性恋者 同志小说 Gay吧 同志 男人 台湾 结婚 肌肉 美国 上海 写真 同性婚姻 男模 男

交友: 北京 广东 湖南 江苏 上海 四川 安徽 辽宁 江西 河北 湖北 福建 浙江 重庆 山东 海外 真人视频 [更多>>](#) 微博主题: 同志老了怎么办 [阳光会员动态](#)

聊天: 用户名: 密码: ☐ 视频聊天 10人 ☐ 甘肃西北 192人 ☐ 海南同志 105人 聊天帮助 阳光聊管进驻阳光微博 [更多聊天](#)

华人最大同志视频交友 **ITONGZHI.COM** 真实视频验证 同志交友更放心 华人最大**视频**交友

阳光微博 还属于属于自己的故事……

阳光最新头条

同性恋不需要特殊权利, 只需平等相待
3月27日晚, 讲座结束后, 吴幼坚接受了本报记者的独家专访。三个小时的讲座, 她看起来丝毫没有倦意, 目光炯炯, 思路清晰, 并在摄影记者的要求下, 再一次即兴舞……

首例男同性恋婚姻权案 双方母亲力挺
据台湾《中国时报》报道, 台湾岛内第二对男性同性恋结婚者陈敬学、高治玮, 提出首件同性恋婚姻登记行政诉讼案, 台北高等行政法院10日开庭, 2人的母亲陪同出庭……

阳光推荐更新

- 激烈反同者更可能是同性恋
- 台北同志曼谷泼水节疯狂玩
- 大学生凭同志小说台北获奖
- 法国校长裸体纽约疑同性恋

本期焦点关注

那些年追的帅哥 痘子姐夫和小舅子

战略合作伙伴

同志圈, 想说爱你不容易

他说显我勾引了他 弱智哥哥乖弟弟

d. 171069: <http://www.171069.com/>

www.171069.com
171069同志网-Gay与Les的家园

[在线投稿](#) [加入收藏](#) [设为首页](#) [会员中心](#) [RSS](#)

[同志首页](#) [男同性恋](#) [女同性恋](#) [同志资讯](#) [同志小说](#) [帅哥型男](#) [同志交友](#) [中年同志](#) [老年同志](#) [胖熊壮熊](#) [军警同志](#) [书连读书](#)

同志交友

点击 购买 访问量超三千万 感动千万同志, 最具深度同志小说 **《爱人随风而来》**

书连同志小说·男同志小说·LES小说·中年小说·老年小说·熊熊小说·军警小说·校园·纪实

171069同志网是书连旗下专业同性恋门户网站

同性恋真实人生写照: 晚景凄凉

Gay-Les热点资讯 欢迎访问171069

Hi, 欢迎来到gay与les同志中国网站

[登陆](#)

[注册](#)

免费注册>> | 忘记密码?

书连同志小说排行榜

[中年]《成熟中年男人的诱惑: 长海叔》

[男男]《激情澎湃: 归属》

[男男]《感动万人: 爱人随风而来》

[熊熊]《奇妙经历: 叠, 我BF是特工》

[中年]《刘所长与周老板的真情故事》

[男男]《官场同志: 龙凤会馆》

同性爱情幸福的五点要 ☐ 同志观点

中老年人激情视频伤了 ☐ 同志观点

长海叔

南方北方(全本) ☐ 军警同志小说

中年同志小说

2012-03-26 20:57:06

e. RLES: www.rcles.com



f. 爱白网: www.aibai.com



Appendix IV: Classical Chinese Novels with Homoerotic Content⁸²

Period of Origin	Title	Author
Ming dynasty (A.D. 1368-1644)	Xiu-ta ye-shi (<i>Unofficial Records of the Embroidered Couch</i>)	Lu Tien-Cheng (A.D. 1580-1620)
	Lang-shi (<i>Romantic Story</i>)	Anonymous
	Bai-yuan-chuan (<i>One Hundred Love Stories</i>)	Anonymous
	Shuang-feng-chi (<i>Two Peaks Records</i>)	Anonymous
Qing dynasty (1644-1911)	Tao-hua-ying (<i>The Shadow of the Peach Blossom</i>)	Xu Cheng
	Nong-qing-kua-shi (<i>The Happy Story of Intense Passion</i>)	Anonymous
	Zhu-ling Ye-shi (<i>Unofficial History of the Bamboo Garden</i>)	Anonymous
	Ping-Hua Bao-Jian (<i>Precious Mirror for Appreciating Flowers</i>)	Chen Zenzhu
	Hong-Lou-Meng (<i>Dream of Red Mansions</i>)	Cao Xueqin
Date Unknown (either Ming or Qing)	Bian-er Chai (<i>Wearing a Cap but also Hairpins</i>)	Zuixifu Xinyezhuren
	Seng-ni nie-hai (<i>Monks and Nuns in a Sea of Sins</i>)	Tang yin
	Chun-deng Mi-si (<i>The Fascinating Stories of the Spring Lanterns</i>)	Anonymous
	Shuang-Yin-Yuan (<i>Pairs of Predestined Relationships</i>)	Anonymous

⁸² References: Ruan, 1991; Zhang, 2001.

Appendix V: *Euphemisms for Male Same-Sex Relations in Imperial China*⁸³

1. 兔儿爷/兔子: Rabbit father/Rabbit son
2. 分桃之爱/余桃/分桃: Splitting the peach/shared peach
3. 龙阳之兴/龙阳/龙阳之好: Long Yang (Dragon Sun)
4. 抱被之欢: The joy to be held
5. 男风: Male wind; male practice
6. 相公: Traditional deferential term wife calls husband with, but skewed to mean male prostitute in modern society
7. 断袖之癖/断袖: “Cut Sleeve” (Favorite of the “cut sleeve”)
8. 小唱: little song
9. 香火兄弟: Brothers of incense
10. 契兄弟/契哥契弟 (qi): adopted brothers
11. 契父子: adopted father
12. 旱路(姻缘): the dry canal (to describe marriage without “flow”/children)
13. 旱路英雄: stranded hero
14. 外风/外交: Outside wind/outside socialization
15. 男妾/男夫人: Male concubine/male wife
16. 贴烤饼: Sticking a fried biscuit
17. 鄂君绣被: The monarch’s embroidered blanket
18. 寡独书生: Born of loneliness and books
19. 吹箫: playing the bamboo flute
20. 男色: male eroticism, beauty and seductiveness
21. 摸镜: polishing mirrors
22. 后庭花: backyard flower

⁸³ References: Hinsch, 1990, Kang, 2009; Liu, 2005; Also from: <http://dui.lu/index.php/detail/show/152170>.

Appendix VI: *Examples of Tongzhi Microblog Stories*⁸⁴

Microblog Story #1

两个男孩都十六岁，他们之间的关系好到不能再好，有一天一个男孩问另一个男孩：我们可以一辈子都在一起吗？另一个男孩回答：当然。数年后两个男孩都结婚了，一次他们相约吃饭都带着各自的妻儿，饭后临别两个男人握手再见，一切似乎都变得很陌生，转身离开，两个男人都流下了两行泪水.....

Microblog Story #2

分手后他们第一次碰面“你过得好么”“很好啊 怎么不好”他夸张的打着哈哈应着 面前的男生抬头直直望着他“可是 我过得不好 我每天都很难过 每天都拼命的想你 看到你送的东西 我就... 诶 没事拉 你过得好就好 呵呵...”他搂住男生 不容抗拒的用唇堵住他的嘴“没有你 我根本没办法过的好.....”

Microblog Story #3

“我们期末作业要做视频，能请你当男主角么？”...“我想了想，普通的爱情故事太没激情了，不如把女主角换成男的怎么样？”...“时间太赶找不到另外的男主角了，干脆我辛苦一点兼任好了”...“还是太没爆点了，再加一个 Kiss 镜头好了~”终于受不了的某人：“靠！居心不良我都忍了，还敢得寸进尺！”

Microblog Story #4

一堂课两个小时，这个男生已经来回回十几次。每次都是声称自己走错了教室，最后，年轻英俊的教授忍不住开口：“这位同学，你已经第二十次走错了，这种借口，你觉得有意思么？”“不，不是借口有意思，是我对您...有意思...”

⁸⁴ Compilations of microblog stories are commonly linked to on *tongzhi* websites. For example: <http://hi.baidu.com/glpopo/item/476fbc72a5c5b84bee1e535b>.

Appendix VII: Culturally Specific Terms Used By Tongzhi (Often Online)

1. 玻璃(*boli* glass): Name for *tongzhi*.
2. 兔子(*tuzi* rabbit): Contemporary slang for gays.
3. 公司(*gongsi* company): A public meeting location for gay gatherings.
4. MB(Money-boy): male prostitute in the homosexual circle, sometimes called “swans” or “geese.”
5. 1/0: roles in a male homosexual relationship. 1 is the “husband” or “penetrator,” 0 is the “wife” or “penetrated.”
6. 419: in Chinese, these numbers sound like the English phrase “for one night,” and so indicate a one night stand
7. GAY 吧(*ba*): gay bar
8. 熊(*xiong* bear): chubby gay man
9. 哥哥(*gege* older brother): gay male whose outward appearance is masculine
10. 弟弟(*didi* younger brother): A gay male whose outward appearance is feminine
11. CC: “sissy” in the English pronunciation; feminine male homosexuals
12. 直人(*zhiren* Straight person): heterosexual person
13. 直同志(*zhitongzhi* straight *tongzhi*): heterosexual person who considers himself as part of the *tongzhi* movement and community
14. “出柜”(chugui Come out of the closet): to publicly indicate one’s homosexual identity
15. 现身/亮相(*xiansheng* or *liangxiang* to show yourself): showing oneself to society as a homosexual
16. 拉拉(*lala*): lesbian
17. Fruit Fly (FF): homosexual person who is not “out” to anyone